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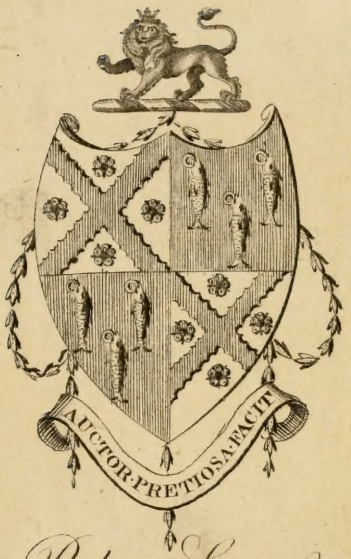

Robert Lenox
NEW YORK.

212
DAVIES

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

Sometime Preſident of the College in New-Jerſey.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

TO WHICH ARE NOW ADDED

THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORMER EDITIONS;

MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR;

AND

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By the Rev. Drs. Gibbons and Finley.

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THE preſent ſtate is the infancy of human nature; and all the events of time, even thoſe that make ſuch noiſe, and determine the fate of kingdoms, are but the little affairs of children. But if we look forwards and trace human nature to maturity, we meet with events vaſt, intereſting and majeſtic; and ſuch as nothing but divine authority can render credible to us who are ſo apt to judge of things by what we ſee. To one of thoſe ſcenes I would direct your attention this day; I mean the ſolemn, tremendous, and glorious ſcene of the univerſal judgment.

You have ſometimes ſeen a ſtately building in ruins; come now and view the ruins of a demoliſhed world. You have often ſeen a feeble mortal ſtruggling in the agonies of death, and his ſhattered frame diſſolved; come now and view univerſal nature ſeverely labouring and agonizing in her laſt convulſions, and her well-compacted ſyſtem diſſolved. You have heard of earthquakes here and there that have laid Liſbon, Palermo, and a few other cities in ruins; come now and feel the tremors and convulſions of the whole globe, that blend cities and countries, oceans and continents, mountains, plains, and vallies in one

promiſcuous heap. You have a thouſand times beheld the moon walking in brightneſs, and the ſun ſhining in his ſtrength; now look and ſee the ſun turned into darkneſs, and the moon into blood.

It is our lot to live in an age of confuſion, blood, and ſlaughter; an age in which our attention is engaged by the claſh of arms, the clangor of trumpets, the roar of artillery, and the dubious fate of kingdoms; but draw off your thoughts from theſe objects for an hour, and fix them on objects more ſolemn and intereſting: come view

> "A ſcene that yields
> A louder trumpet, and more dreadful fields;
> The World alarm'd, both Earth and Heav'n o'erthrown,
> And gaſping Nature's laſt tremendous groan;
> Death's ancient ſceptre broke, the teeming Tomb,
> The righteous Judge, and man's eternal Doom." YOUNG.

Such a ſcene there certainly is before us; for St. Paul tells us that *God hath given aſſurance to all men he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that Man whom he hath ordained;* and that his reſurrection, the reſurrection of him who is God and man, is a demonſtrative proof of it.

My text is the concluſion of St. Paul's defence or ſermon before the famous court of Areopagus, in the learned and philoſophical city of Athens. In this auguſt and polite aſſembly he ſpeaks with the boldneſs, and in the evangelical ſtrain, of an apoſtle of Chriſt. He firſt inculcates upon them the great truths of natural religion, and labours faithfully, though in a very gentle and inoffenſive manner, to reform them from that ſtupid idolatry and ſuperſtition into which even this learned and philoſophical city was ſunk, though a Socrates, a Plato, and the moſt celebrated ſages and moraliſts of pagan antiquity had lived and taught in it. Afterwards, in the cloſe of his diſcourſe, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of Chriſtianity, particularly the great duty of repentance, from evangelical motives, the reſurrection of the

the dead, and the final judgment. But no ſooner has he entered upon this ſubject than he is interrupted, and ſeems to have broken off abruptly; for when he has juſt hinted at the then unpopular doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead, we are told, *ſome mocked*, and others put it off to another hearing: *We will hear thee again of this matter.*

In theſe dark times of ignorance which preceded the publication of the goſpel, God ſeemed to wink or connive at the idolatry and various forms of wickedneſs that had overſpread the world; that is, he ſeemed to overlook * or take no notice of them, ſo as either to puniſh them, or to give the nations explicit calls to repentance. But now, ſays St. Paul, the caſe is altered. Now the goſpel is publiſhed through the world, and therefore God will no longer ſeem to connive at the wickedneſs and impenitence of mankind, but publiſhes his great mandate to a rebel world, explicitly and loudly, *commanding all men every where to repent;* and he now gives them particular motives and encouragements to this duty.

One motive of the greateſt weight, which was never ſo clearly or extenſively publiſhed before, is the doctrine of the univerſal judgment. This the connection implies: *He now commandeth all men to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a day for judging all men.* And ſurely the proſpect of a judgment muſt be a ſtrong motive to ſinners to repent:—this, if any thing, will rouſe them from their thoughtleſs ſecurity, and bring them to repentance. Repentance ſhould, and one would think muſt be as extenſive as this reaſon for it. This St. Paul intimates. *He now commandeth all men to repent, becauſe he hath given aſſurance to all men* that he has *appointed a day to judge the world.* Wherever the goſpel publiſhes the doctrine of a future judgment, there it requires all men to repent; and wherever it requires repentance, there it enforces the command of this alarming doctrine.

God

* *yperidon.*

God has *given assurance to all men;* that is, to all that hear the gospel, that he has appointed a day for this great purpose, and that Jesus Christ, God-man, is to preside in person in this majestic solemnity. He has given assurance of this; that is, sufficient ground of faith; and the assurance consists in this, that *he hath raised him from the dead.*

The resurrection of Christ gives assurance of this in several respects. It is a specimen and a pledge of a general resurrection, that grand preparative for the judgment: it is an incontestible proof of his divine mission; for God would never work so unprecedented a miracle in favour of an impostor: it is also an authentic attestation of all our Lord's claims; and he expressly claimed the authority of supreme Judge as delegated to him by the Father: *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* John v. 22.

There is a peculiar fitness and propriety in this constitution. It is fit that a world placed under the administration of a Mediator should have a mediatorial Judge. It is fit this high office should be conferred upon him as an honorary reward for his important services and extreme abasement. *Because he humbled himself, therefore God hath highly exalted him.* Phil. ii. 8, 9. It is fit that creatures clothed with bodies should be judged by a man clothed in a body like themselves. Hence it is said that *all judgment is given to the Son, because he is the Son of man.* John v. 27. This would seem a strange reason, did we not understand it in this light. Indeed, was Jesus Christ man only, he would be infinitely unequal to the office of universal Judge; but he is God and Man, *Immanuel, God with us;* and is the fittest person in the universe for the work. It is also fit that Christ should be the supreme Judge, as it will be a great encouragement to his people for their Mediator to execute this office; and it may be added, that hereby the condemnation of the wicked will be rendered more conspicuously just;

just; for, if a Mediator, a Saviour, the Friend of Sinners, condemns them, they must be worthy of condemnation indeed.

Let us now enter upon the majestic scene. But, alas! what images shall I use to represent it? Nothing that we have seen, nothing that we have heard, nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and grovelling, all is faint and obscure that ever the sun shone upon, when compared with the grand phenomena of that day; and we are so accustomed to low and little objects, that it is impossible we should ever raise our thoughts to a suitable pitch of elevation. Ere long we shall be amazed spectators of these majestic wonders, and our eyes and our ears will be our instructors. But now it is necessary we should have such ideas of them as may affect our hearts, and prepare us for them. Let us therefore present to our view those representations which divine revelation, our only guide in this case, gives us of the person of the Judge, and the manner of his appearance; of the resurrection of the dead, and the transformation of the living; of the universal convention of all the sons of men before the supreme tribunal; of their separation to the right and left hand of the Judge, according to their characters; of the judicial process itself; of the decisive sentence; of its execution, and of the conflagration of the world.

As to the person of the Judge, the psalmist tells you, *God is Judge himself.* Psalm l. 6. Yet Christ tells us, *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; and that he hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.* John v. 22, 27. It is therefore Christ Jesus, God-man, as I observed, who shall sustain this high character; and for the reasons already alledged, it is most fit it should be devolved upon him. Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in him, and render him more fit for this office than

than if he were God only, or man only. This is the auguſt Judge before whom we muſt ſtand; and the proſpect may inſpire us with reverence, joy and terror.

As for the manner of his appearance, it will be ſuch as becomes the dignity of his perſon and office. He will ſhine in all the uncreated glories of the Godhead, and in all the gentler glories of a perfect man. His attendants will add a dignity to the grand appearance, and the ſympathy of nature will increaſe the ſolemnity and terror of the day. Let his own word deſcribe him. *The Son of man ſhall come in his glory, and in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels with him; and then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory.* Matt. xxv. 31. xvi. 27. *The Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8. And not only with the angels, thoſe illuſtrious miniſters of the court of Heaven, attend upon that ſolemn occaſion, but alſo all the ſaints who had left the world from Adam to that day; for *thoſe that ſleep in Jeſus*, ſays St. Paul, *will God bring with him.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 14. The grand imagery in Daniel's viſion is applicable to this day; and perhaps to this it primarily refers: *I beheld till the thrones were caſt down*, or rather ſet up,* *and the Ancient of Days did ſit, whoſe garment was white as ſnow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery ſtream iſſued, and came forth from before him: thouſand thouſands miniſtered unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtood before him.* Dan. vii. 9, 10. Perhaps our Lord may exhibit himſelf to the whole world upon this moſt grand occaſion, in the ſame glorious form in which he was ſeen by his favourite

* This ſenſe is moſt agreeable to the connection, and the original word will bear it; which ſignifies *to pitch down*, or *place*, as well as *to throw down*, or *demoliſh*. And the LXX tranſlate it, *the thrones were put up*, or *fixed*.

vourite John, *clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breaſts with a golden girdle: his head and his hairs white like wool, as white as ſnow: his eyes as a flame of fire: his feet like unto fine braſs, as if they burned in a furnace: his voice as the ſound of many waters, and his countenance as the ſun ſhining in his ſtrength.* Rev. i. 13, &c. Another image of inimitable majeſty and terror the ſame writer gives us, when he ſays, *I ſaw a great white throne, and him that ſat on it, from whoſe face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.* Aſtoniſhing! what an image is this! the ſtable earth and heaven cannot bear the majeſty and terror of his look: they fly away affrighted, and ſeek a place to hide themſelves, but no place is found to ſhelter them; every region through the immenſity of ſpace lies open before him.* Rev. xx. 11.

This is the Judge before whom we muſt ſtand; and this is the manner of his appearance. But is this the babe of Bethlehem that lay and wept in the manger? Is this the ſuppoſed ſon of the carpenter, the deſpiſed Galilean? Is this the man of ſorrows? Is this he that was arreſted, was condemned, was buffetted,

* This is the picture drawn by the pencil of inſpiration. We may now contemplate the imagery of a fine human pen.

——————From his great abode
Full on a whirlwind rides the dreadful God:
The tempeſt's rattling winds, the fiery car,
Ten thouſand hoſts his miniſters of war,
The flaming Cherubim, attend his flight,
And Heaven's foundations groan beneath the weight.
Thro' all the ſkies the forky lightnings play,
And radiant ſplendors round his head diſplay.
From his bright eyes affrighted worlds retire;
He ſpeaks in thunder and he breathes in fire.
Garment of heavenly light array the God;
His throne a bright conſolidated cloud—
Support me, Heaven, I ſhudder with affright;
I quake, I ſink with terror at the ſight!

The Day of Judgment, a Poem, a little varied.

fetted, was ſpit upon, was crowned with thorns, was executed as a ſlave and a criminal upon the croſs? Yes, it is he; the very ſame Jeſus of Nazareth. But O how changed! how deſervedly exalted! Let heaven and earth congratulate his advancement. Now let his enemies appear, and ſhew their uſual contempt and malignity. Now, Pilate, condemn the King of the Jews as an uſurper. Now ye Jews, raiſe the clamour, *crucify him, crucify him.*

" Now bow the knee in ſcorn, preſent the reed;
" Now tell the ſcourg'd Impoſtor he muſt bleed." YOUNG.

Now, ye Deiſts and Infidels, diſpute his divinity and the truth of his religion if you can. Now, ye hypocritical chriſtians, try to impoſe upon him with your idle pretences. Now deſpiſe his grace, laugh at his threatenings, and make light of his diſpleaſure if you are able. Ah! now their courage fails, and terror ſurround them like armed men. Now *they hide themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and ſay to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;* for the lamb that once bled as a ſacrifice for ſin now appears in all the terrors of a lion; and *the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand?* Rev. vi. 15. O! could they hide themſelves in the bottom of the ocean, or in ſome rock that bears the weight of the mountains, how happy would they think themſelves. But, alas!

" Seas caſt the monſters forth to meet their doom,
" And rocks but priſon up for wrath to come." YOUNG.

While the Judge is deſcending, the parties to be judged will be ſummoned to appear. But where are they? They are all aſleep in their duſty beds, except the then generation. And how ſhall they be rouſed from their long ſleep of thouſands of years? *Why, the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. *The trumpet ſhall ſound,* and they that

that are then alive ſhall not paſs into eternity through the beaten road of death, but *at the laſt trumpet they ſhall be changed*, changed into immortals *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. Now all the millions of mankind, of whatever country and nation, whether they expect this tremendous day or not, all feel a ſhock through their whole frames, while they are inſtantaneouſly metamorphoſed in every limb, and the pulſe of immortality begins to beat ſtrong in every part. Now alſo the ſlumberers under ground begin to ſtir, to rouſe and ſpring to life. Now ſee graves opening, tombs burſting, charnel-houſes rattling, the earth heaving, and all alive, while theſe ſubterranean armies are burſting their way through. See clouds of human duſt and broken bones darkening the air, and flying from country to country over intervening continents and oceans to meet their kindred fragments, and repair the ſhattered frame with pieces collected from a thouſand different quarters, whither they were blown away by winds, or waſhed by waters. See what millions ſtart up in company in the ſpots where Nineveh, Babylon, Jeruſalem, Rome, and London once ſtood! Whole armies ſpring to life in fields where they once loſt their lives in battle, and were left unburied; in fields which fattened with their blood, produced a thouſand harveſts, and now produce a crop of men. See a ſucceſſion of thouſands of years riſing in crowds from grave-yards round the places where they once attended, in order to prepare for this deciſive day. Nay, graves yawn, and ſwarms burſt into life under palaces and buildings of pride and pleaſure, in fields and foreſts, in thouſands of places where graves were never ſuſpected. How are the living ſurpriſed to find men ſtarting into life under their feet, or juſt beſide them; ſome beginning to ſtir, and heave the ground; others half-riſen, and others quite diſengaged from the incumbrance of earth, and ſtanding upright before them! What vaſt multitudes that had ſlept in a wa-

tery grave now emerge from rivers, and seas, and oceans, and throw them into a tumult! Now appear to the view of all the world the Goliaths, the Anakims, and the other giants of ancient times; and now the millions of infants, those little particles of life, start up at once, perhaps in full maturity, or perhaps in the lowest class of mankind, dwarfs of immortality. *The dead, small and great*, will arise to *stand before God; and the sea* shall *give up the dead which were in it.* Rev. xx. 12, 13. Now the *many that sleep in the dust shall awake and come forth; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* Dan. xii. 2. *Now the hour is come when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28. *Though after* our *skin worms destroy this body, yet in* our *flesh shall* we *see God, whom* we *shall see for* ourselves; *and* these *eyes shall behold him, and not another.* Job. xix. 26, 27. Then *this corruptible* [body] *shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

As the characters, and consequently the doom of mankind will be very different, so we may reasonably suppose they will rise in very different forms of glory or dishonour, of beauty or deformity. Their bodies indeed will all be improved to the highest degree, and all made vigorous, capacious and immortal. But here lies the difference: the bodies of the righteous will be strengthened to bear *an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory*, but those of the wicked will be strengthened to sustain an heavier load of misery; their strength will be but mere strength to suffer an horrid capacity of greater pain. The immortality of the righteous will be the duration of their happiness, but that of the wicked of their misery: their immortality, the highest privilege of their nature, will be their heaviest curse; and they would willingly exchange their duration with an insect of a day,

or

or a fading flower. The bodies of the righteous will *shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever;* but those of the wicked will be grim and shocking, and ugly, and hateful as hell. The bodies of the righteous will be fit mansions for their heavenly spirits to inhabit, and every feature will speak the delightful passions that agreeably work within; but the wicked will be but spirits of hell clothed in the material bodies; and malice, rage, despair, and all the infernal passions will lower in their countenances, and cast a dismal gloom around them. O! they will then be nothing else but shapes of deformity and terror! they will look like the natives of hell, and spread horror around them with every look.*

With what reluctance may we suppose will the souls of the wicked enter again into a state of union with these shocking forms, that will be everlasting engines of torture to them, as they once were instruments of sin! But O! with what joy will the souls of the righteous return to their old habitations, in which they once served their God with honest, though feeble endeavours, now so gloriously repaired and improved! How will they congratulate the resurrection of their old companions from their long sleep in death, now made fit to share with them in the sublime employments and fruitions of heaven! Every organ will be an instrument of service and an inlet of pleasure, and the soul shall no longer be encumbered but assisted by this union to the body. O what surprising creatures can Omnipotence raise from the dust! To what an high degree of beauty can the Almighty refine the

* How weak, how pale, how haggard, how obscene,
What more than death in every face and mien!
With what distress, and glarings of affright
They shock the heart, and turn away the sight!
In gloomy orbs their trembling eye-balls roll,
And tell the horrid secrets of the soul.
Each gesture mourns, each look is black with care;
And every groan is loaden with despair. YOUNG.

the offſprings of the earth! and into what miracles of glory and bleſſedneſs can he form them!*

Now the Judge is come, the judgment-ſeat is erected, the dead are raiſed. And what follows? Why the univerſal convention of all the ſons of men before the judgment-ſeat. The place of judgment will probably be the extenſive region of the air, the moſt capacious for the reception of ſuch a multitude; for St. Paul tells us, the ſaints ſhall *be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 17. And that the air will be the place of judicature, perhaps, may be intimated when our Lord is repreſented as coming in the clouds, and ſitting upon a cloudy throne. Theſe expreſſions can hardly be underſtood literally, for clouds which conſiſt of vapours and rarified particles of water, ſeem very improper materials for a chariot of ſtate, or a throne of judgment; but they may very properly intimate that Chriſt will make his appearance, and hold his court in the region of the clouds; that is, in the air; and perhaps that the rays of light and majeſtic darkneſs ſhall be ſo blended around him as to form the appearance of a cloud to the view of the wondering and gazing world.

To this upper region, from whence our globe will lie open to view far and wide, will all the ſons of men be convened. And they will be gathered together by the miniſtry of angels, the officers of this grand court. *The Son of man, when he comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, ſhall ſend forth his angels with a great ſound of the trumpet; and they ſhall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other.* Matt. xxiv. 30, 31. Their miniſtry

* Mark, on the right, how amiable a grace!
Their Maker's image freſh in every face!
What purple bloom my raviſh'd ſoul admires,
And their eyes ſparkling with immortal fires!
Triumphant beauty! charms that riſe above
This world, and in bleſt angels kindle love!——
O! the tranſcendent glories of the Juſt! YOUNG.

miniſtry alſo extends to the wicked, whom they will drag away to judgment and execution, and ſeparate from the righteous. For *in the end of the world*, ſays Chriſt, *the Son of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire: there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth.* Matt. xiii. 40, 41, 42.

What an auguſt convocation, what a vaſt aſſembly is this! See flights of angels darting round the globe from eaſt to weſt, from pole to pole, gathering up here and there the ſcattered ſaints, chooſing them out from among the crowd of the ungodly, and bearing them aloft on their wings *to meet their Lord in the air!* while the wretched crowd look and gaze, and ſtretch their hands, and would mount up along with them; but, alas! they muſt be left behind, and wait for another kind of convoy; a convoy of cruel, unrelenting devils, who ſhall ſnatch them up as their prey with malignant joy, and place them before the flaming tribunal. Now all the ſons of men meet in one immenſe aſſembly. Adam beholds the long line of his poſterity, and they behold their common father. Now Europeans and Aſiatics, the ſwarthy ſons of Africa and the ſavages of America, mingle together. Chriſtians, Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, the learned and the ignorant, kings and ſubjects, rich and poor, free and bond, form one promiſcuous crowd. Now all the vaſt armies that conquered or fell under Xerxes, Darius, Alexander, Cæſar, Scipio, Tamerlane, Marlborough, and other illuſtrious warriors, unite in one vaſt army. There, in ſhort, all the ſucceſſive inhabitants of the earth for thouſands of years appear in one aſſembly. And how inconceivably great muſt the number be! When the inhabitants of but one country are met together, you are ſtruck with the ſurvey. Were all the inhabitants of a kingdom convened in one place, how much more ſtriking would be the ſight! Were all the inhabitants of all the kingdoms

doms of the earth convened in one general rendezvous, how aſtoniſhing and vaſt would be the multitude! But what is even this vaſt multitude compared with the long ſucceſſion of generations that have peopled the globe, in all ages, and in all countries, from the firſt commencement of time to the laſt day! Here numbers fail, and our thoughts are loſt in the immenſe ſurvey. The extenſive region of the air is very properly choſen as the place of judgment; for this globe would not be ſufficient for ſuch a multitude to ſtand upon. In that prodigious aſſembly, my brethren, you and I muſt mingle. And we ſhall not be loſt in the crowd, nor eſcape the notice of our Judge; but his eye will be as particularly fixed upon every one as though there were but one before him.

To increaſe the number, and add a majeſty and terror to the aſſembly, the fallen angels alſo make their appearance at the bar. This they have long expected with horror, as the period when their conſummate miſery is to commence. When Chriſt, in the form of a ſervant, exerciſed a God-like power over them in the days of his reſidence upon earth, they almoſt miſtook his firſt coming as a Saviour for his ſecond coming as their Judge; and therefore they expoſtulated, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* Matt. viii. 29. That is to ſay, We expect thou wilt at laſt appear to torment us, but we did not expect thy coming ſo ſoon. Agreeable to this, St. Peter tells us, *God ſpared not the angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to hell, and delivered them as priſoners into chains of darkneſs, to be reſerved unto judgment.* 2 Peter ii. 4. To the ſame purpoſe St. Jude ſpeaks: *The angels which kept not their firſt eſtate, but left their own habitation, he hath reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day.* Jude 6. What horribly majeſtic figures will theſe be! and what a dreadful appearance will they make at the bar! angels and archangels, thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers blaſted, ſtripped of their primæval

primæval glories, and lying in ruins; yet majeſtic even in ruins, gigantic forms of terror and deformity; great though degraded, horribly illuſtrious, angels fallen, gods undeified and depoſed.*

Now the Judge is ſeated, and anxious millions ſtand before him waiting for their doom. As yet there is no ſeparation made between them; but men and devils, ſaints and ſinners, are promiſcuouſly blended together. But ſee! at the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion; they part, they ſort together according to their character, and divide to the right and left. *When all nations are gathered before the Son of man*, himſelf has told us, *he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from the goats; and he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* Matt. xxv. 32, 33. And, O! what ſtrange ſeparations are now made! what multitudes that once ranked themſelves among the ſaints, and were highly eſteemed for their piety by others as well as themſelves, are now baniſhed from among them, and placed with the trembling criminals on the left hand! and how many poor, honeſt-hearted, doubting, deſponding ſouls, whoſe foreboding fears had often placed them there, now find themſelves, to their agreeable ſurpriſe, ſtationed on the right hand of their Judge, who ſmiles upon them! What connections are now broken! what hearts torn aſunder! what intimate companions, what dear relations, parted forever! neighbour from neighbour, maſters from ſervants, friend from friend, parents from children, huſband from wife; thoſe who were but one fleſh, and who lay in one another's boſoms, muſt part for ever.

Thoſe

* ——————— the foe of God and man,
From his dark den, blaſpheming, drags his chain,
And rears his brazen front, with thunder ſcarr'd;
Receives his ſentence, and begins his hell.
All vengeance paſt, now ſeems abundant grace!
Like meteors in a ſtormy ſky, how roll
His baleful eyes! he curſes whom he dreads,
And deems it the firſt moment of his fall. YOUNG.

Thoſe that lived in the ſame country, who ſuſtained the ſame denomination, who worſhipped in the ſame place, who lived under one roof, who lay in the ſame womb, and ſucked the ſame breaſts, muſt now part for ever. And is there no ſeparation likely to be made then in our families or in our congregation? Is it likely we ſhall all be placed in a body upon the right hand? Are all the members of our families prepared for that glorious ſtation? Alas! are there not ſome families among us who, it is to be feared, ſhall all be ſent off to the left hand, without ſo much as one exception? for who are thoſe miſerable multitudes on the left hand? There, through the medium of revelation, I ſee the drunkard, the ſwearer, the whoremonger, the liar, the defrauder, and the various claſſes of profane, profligate ſinners. There I ſee the unbeliever, the impenitent the lukewarm formaliſt, and the various claſſes of hypocrites and half-chriſtians. There I ſee the *families that call not upon God's name*, and whole nations that forget him. And, O! what vaſt multitudes, what millions of millions of millions do all theſe make! And do not ſome, alas! do not many of you belong to one or other of theſe claſſes of ſinners whom God, and Chriſt, and ſcripture, and conſcience, conſpire to condemn? If ſo, to the left hand you muſt depart among devils and trembling criminals, whoſe guilty minds forbode their doom before the judicial proceſs begins. But who are thoſe glorious immortals upon the right hand? They are thoſe who now mourn over their ſins, reſiſt and forſake them; they are thoſe who have ſurrendered themſelves entirely to God, through Jeſus Chriſt, who have heartily complied with the method of ſalvation revealed in the goſpel; who have been formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the moſt earneſt perſevering endeavour of their lives to work out their own ſalvation, and to live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in the world. Theſe are ſome of the principal lineaments of their character

character who ſhall have their ſafe and honourable ſtation at the right hand of the ſovereign Judge. And is not this the prevailing character of ſome of you? I hope and believe it is. Through the medium of ſcripture-revelation then I ſee you in that bleſſed ſtation. And, O! I would make an appointment with you this day to meet you there. Yes, let us this day appoint the time and place where we ſhall meet after the ſeparation and diſperſion that death will make among us: and let it be at the right hand of the Judge at the laſt day. If I be ſo happy as to obtain ſome humble place there, I ſhall look out for you, my dear people. There I ſhall expect your company, that we may aſcend together to join in the more exalted ſervices and enjoyments of heaven, as we have frequently in the humbler forms of worſhip in the church on earth. But, O! when I think what unexpected ſeparations will then be made, I tremble leſt I ſhould miſs ſome of you there. And are you not afraid leſt you ſhould miſs ſome of your friends, or ſome of your families there? or that you ſhould then ſee them move off to the left hand, and looking back with eagerneſs upon you as if they would ſay, "This is my doom through your careleſſneſs; had you but acted a faithful part towards me, while converſant with you or under your care, I might now have had my place among the ſaints." O! how could you bear ſuch ſignificant piercing looks from a child, a ſervant, or a friend? Therefore now do all in your power to *convert ſinners from the error of their way, and to ſave their ſouls from death.*

When we entered upon this practical digreſſion, we left all things ready for the judicial proceſs. And now the trial begins. Now *God judges the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt.* Rom. ii. 16. All the works of all the ſons of men will then be tried; *for*, ſays St. Paul, *we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every man may receive the things done in the body according to what he hath done, whether it be good, or whe-*

ther it be evil. 2 Cor. v. 10. St. John in his vision *saw the dead judged according to their works.* Rev. xx. 12, 13. These works immediately refer to the actions of the life, but they may also include the inward temper, and thoughts of the soul, and the words of the lips; for all these shall be brought into judgment. *God*, says Solomon, *will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Eccl. xii. 14. And though we are too apt to think our words are free, he that is to be our Judge has told us, that *for every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of Judgment; for by thy words*, as well as thy actions, *thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* Matt. xii. 36, 37.

What strange discoveries will this trial make? what noble dispositions that never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes; what generous purposes crushed in embryo for want of power to execute them; what pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty, or misconstrued by ignorance and prejudice; what affectionate aspirations, what devout exercises of heart, which lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, are now brought to full light, and receive the approbation of the supreme Judge before the assembled universe? But on the other hand, what works of shame and darkness, what hidden things of dishonesty, what dire secrets of treachery, hypocrisy, lewdness, and various forms of wickedness artfully and industriously concealed from human sight, what horrid exploits of sin now burst to light in all their hellish colours, to the confusion of the guilty, and the astonishment and horror of the universe? Sure, the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell, or the biography of devils! Then the mask of dissimulation will be torn off. Clouded characters will clear up, and men as well as things will appear in their true light. Their hearts will be as it were turned outwards, and all their secrets exposed

to

to full view. The deſign of the judicial inquiry will not be to inform the omniſcient Judge, but to convince all worlds of the juſtice of his proceedings; and this deſign renders it neceſſary that all theſe things ſhould be laid open to their ſight, that they may ſee the grounds upon which he paſſes ſentence. And may not the proſpect of ſuch a diſcovery fill ſome of you with horror? for many of your actions, and eſpecially of your thoughts, will not bear the light. How would it confound you, if they were now all publiſhed, even in the ſmall circle of your acquaintance? How then can you bear to have them all fully expoſed before God, angels, and men! Will it not confound you with ſhame, and make you objects of everlaſting contempt to all worlds?

Theſe are the facts to be tried. But by what rule ſhall they be tried? From the goodneſs and juſtice of God we may conclude that men will be judged by ſome rule known to them, or which at leaſt it was in their power to know. Now the light of reaſon, the law of nature, or conſcience, is an univerſal rule, and univerſally known, or at leaſt knowable by all the ſons of men, Heathens and Mahometans as well as Jews and Chriſtians: and therefore all mankind ſhall be judged by this rule. This the conſciences of all now forebode; *for when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe, not having the law, are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another.* Rom. ii. 14, 15. By this rule their conſciences now acquit or condemn them, becauſe they know that by this rule they ſhall then be judged: this ſeems to be a kind of innate preſentment of human nature. As the heathens were invincibly ignorant of every rule but this, they ſhall be judged by this only. But as to thoſe parts of the world that enjoyed or might enjoy the advantages of revelation, whether by tradition with

with the Ante-Mosaic world, or in the writings of Moses and the prophets with the Jews, or in the clearer dispensation of the gospel with the christian world, they shall be judged by this revealed law. And by how much the more perfect the rule, by so much the stricter will their account be. That which would be an excusable infirmity in an African or an American Indian, may be an aggravated crime in us who enjoy such superior advantages. This is evident from the repeated declarations of sacred writ. *As many as have sinned without the law*, (that is, without the written or revealed law) *shall also perish without the law;* and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel. Rom. ii. 12, 16. *If I had not come and spoken unto them*, says the blessed Jesus, *they would not have had sin;* that is, they would not have had sin so aggravated, or they would not have had the particular sin of unbelief in rejecting the Messiah: *but now they have no cloak for their sin*, John xv. 22. that is, now when they have had such abundant conviction, they are utterly inexcusable. *This*, says he, *is the condemnation;* that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* John iii. 19. *That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes* (observe, ignorance is no sufficient excuse, except when invincible) *shall be beaten with few stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.* Luke xii. 47, 48. Upon these maxims of eternal righteousness, the Judge will proceed in pronouncing the doom of the world; and it was upon these principles he declared, in the days of his flesh, *that it should be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon*, than for those places that enjoyed the advantages of his

his miniſtry, and miſimproved it. Matt. xi. 21, 24. Whether upon theſe principles ſinners among us have not reaſon to expect they will obtain an horrid precedence among the millions of ſinners in that day, I leave you to judge, and to tremble at the thought.

There is another repreſentation of this proceeding which we often meet with in the ſacred writings, in alluſion to the forms of proceedings in human courts. In courts of law law-books are referred to, opened, and read for the direction of the judges, and ſentence is paſſed according to them. In alluſion to this cuſtom, Daniel, in viſion, ſaw *the judgment ſet, and the books were opened.* Dan. vii. 10. And St. John had the ſame repreſentation made to him: *I ſaw the dead,* ſays he, *ſmall and great, ſtand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.* Rev. xx. 12.

Should we purſue this ſignificant alluſion, we may ſay, then will be opened the book of the law of nature; and mankind will be tried according to its precepts, and doomed according to its ſentence.—This is a plain and vaſt volume, open and legible now to all that can read their own hearts; that have eyes to look round upon the works of God, which ſhew his glory and their duty; and who have ears to hear the lectures which the ſun and moon, and all the works of creation, read to them night and day. Then too will be opened the book of ſcripture-revelation, in all its parts, both the law of Moſes and the goſpel of Chriſt; and according to it will thoſe be judged who lived under one or other of theſe diſpenſations. Then it will appear that *that* neglected, old-faſhioned book called the Bible, is not a romance, or a ſyſtem of trifling truths, but the ſtandard of life and death to all who had acceſs to it. Then will alſo be opened the book of God's remembrance. In that are recorded all the thoughts, words, actions, both

good

good and bad, of all the ſons of men; and now the immenſe account ſhall be publickly read before the aſſembled univerſe. Then likewiſe as a counterpart to this will be opened the book of conſcience; conſcience which, though unnoticed, writes our whole hiſtory as with an iron pen, and the point of a diamond.* Then alſo, we are expreſsly told, will be opened the book of life, Rev. xx. 12. in which are contained all the names of all the heirs of Heaven. This ſeems to be an alluſion to thoſe regiſters which are kept in cities or corporations, of the names of all the citizens or members who have a right to all the privileges of the ſociety. And I know not what we can underſtand by it ſo properly as the perfect knowledge which the omniſcient God has, and always had from eternity, of thoſe on whom he purpoſed to beſtow eternal life, and whom he has from eternity, as it were, regiſtered as members of the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, who are written in heaven, or as denizens of that bleſſed city. Theſe, having been all prepared by his grace in time, ſhall be admitted into the New Jeruſalem in that day of the Lord.

Farther, the repreſentation which the ſcripture gives us of the proceedings of that day leads us to conceive

* O treacherous Conſcience! while ſhe ſeems to ſleep
On roſe and myrtle, lull'd with Syren ſong;
While ſhe ſeems, nodding o'er her charge, to drop
On headlong appetite the ſlackened rein,
And give us up to licence unrecall'd,
Unmark'd—as from behind her ſecret ſtand
The ſly informer minutes ev'ry fault,
And her dread diary with horror fills—
Unnoted notes each moment miſapply'd,
In leaves more durable than leaves of braſs,
Writes our whole hiſtory; which Death ſhall read
In every pale offenders private ear;
And Judgment publiſh, publiſh to more worlds
Than this; and endleſs age in groans reſound.
Such, ſinner, is that ſleeper in thy breaſt:
Such is her ſlumber; and her vengeance ſuch
For ſlighted counſel ———— YOUNG.

conceive of witneſſes being produced to prove the facts. The omniſcient judge will be a witneſs againſt the guilty. *I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a ſwift witneſs againſt the ſorcerers, and againſt the ſwearers, and againſt the adulterers, and againſt thoſe that oppreſs, and againſt thoſe that fear not me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Mal. iii. 5. And he will no doubt be a witneſs for his people, and atteſt their ſincere piety, their intereſt in Chriſt, and thoſe good diſpoſitions or actions which were known only to him.

Angels alſo, that miniſtered to the heirs of ſalvation, and no doubt inſpected the affairs of mankind, will be witneſſes. Devils too who once tempted, will now become accuſers. Conſcience within will alſo be a witneſs? it ſhall acquit the righteous of many unjuſt imputations, and atteſt the ſincerity of their hearts and their many good actions. But, O! it will be the moſt terrible witneſs againſt the ungodly!— They will be witneſſes againſt themſelves (Joſh. xxiv. 22.) and this will render them ſelf-tormentors. Conſcience will re-echo to the voice of the Judge, and cry Guilty, guilty, to all his accuſations. And who can make the wicked happy when they torment themſelves? Who can acquit them when they are ſelf-condemned? Conſcience, whoſe evidence is now ſo often ſuppreſſed, will then have full ſcope, and ſhall be regarded. Whom conſcience condemns, the righteous Judge will alſo condemn: *for if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 20. knoweth many more grounds for condemning us than we, and therefore much more will he condemn us. In ſhort, ſo full will be evidence againſt the ſinner, that the ſcripture, which is full of ſtriking imagery to affect human nature, gives life to inanimated things upon this occaſion, and repreſents them as ſpeaking. Stones and duſt ſhall witneſs againſt the ungodly. The duſt under the feet of their miniſters ſhall witneſs againſt them. Matt. x. 14. *The ſtone ſhall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber ſhall anſwer it.*

it. Hab. ii. 11. The ruſt of their gold and ſilver ſhall be a witneſs againſt them, and ſhall eat their fleſh as it were fire. James v. 3. Nay, the heavens ſhall reveal their iniquity, and the earth ſhall riſe up againſt them. Job xx. 27. Heaven and earth were called to witneſs that life and death were ſet before them, Deut. xxx. 19. and now they will give in their evidence that they chuſe death. Thus God and all his creatures, heaven, earth and hell riſe up againſt them, accuſe and condemn them. And will not ſinners accuſe and witneſs againſt one another? Undoubtedly they will. They who lived or converſed together upon earth, and were ſpectators of each other's conduct, will then turn mutual witneſſes againſt each other. O, tremendous thought! that friend ſhould inform and witneſs againſt friend; parents againſt children, and children againſt parents; miniſters againſt their people, and people againſt their miniſters! Alas! what a confounding teſtimony againſt each other muſt thoſe give in who are now ſinning together!

Thus the way is prepared for the paſſing ſentence. The caſe was always clear to the omniſcient Judge, but now it is ſo fully diſcuſſed and atteſted by ſo many evidences, that it is quite plain to the whole world of creatures who can judge only by ſuch evidence, and for whoſe conviction the formality of a judicial proceſs is appointed. How long a time this grand court will ſit we cannot determine, nor has God thought fit to inform us; but when we conſider how particular the trial will be, and the innumerable multitude to be tried, it ſeems reaſonable to ſuppoſe it will be a long ſeſſion. It is indeed often called a day; but it is evident a day in ſuch caſes does not ſignify a natural day, but the ſpace of time allotted for tranſacting a buſineſs, though it be an hundred, or even a thouſand years. Creatures are incapable of viewing all things at once, and therefore ſince the trial, as I obſerved, is intended to convince them of the equity of the divine proceedings, it is proper the proceedings

proceedings ſhould be particular and leiſurely, that they may have time to obſerve them.

We are now come to the grand criſis upon which the eternal ſtates of all mankind turn; I mean the paſſing the great deciſive ſentence. Heaven and earth are all ſilence and attention, while the Judge with ſmiles in his face and a voice ſweeter than heavenly muſic, turns to the glorious company on his right hand, and pours all the joys of heaven into their ſouls in that tranſporting ſentence, of which he has graciouſly left us a copy: *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Every word is full of emphaſis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the deſires of thoſe to whom it is addreſſed. They deſired, and longed, and languiſhed to be near their Lord; and now their Lord invites them, Come near me, and dwell with me for ever. There was nothing they deſired ſo much as the bleſſing of God, nothing they feared ſo much as his curſe, and now their fears are entirely removed and their deſigns fully accompliſhed, for the ſupreme Judge pronounces them bleſſed of his Father. They were all poor in ſpirit, moſt of them poor in this world, and all ſenſible of their unworthineſs. How agreeable then are they ſurpriſed to hear themſelves invited to a kingdom, invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood-royal, born to thrones and crowns! How will they be loſt in wonder, joy, and praiſe, to find that the great God entertained thoughts of love towards them before they had a being, or the world in which they dwelt had its foundation laid, and that he was preparing a kingdom for them, while they were nothing, unknown even in idea, except to himſelf? O! brethren, dare any of us expect this ſentence will be paſſed upon us? Methinks the very thought overwhelms us. Methinks our feeble frames muſt be unable to bear up under the extatic hope of ſo ſweetly oppreſſive a bleſſedneſs. O! if this be our ſentence in that day, it is

no matter what we ſuffer in the intermediate ſpace; that ſentence would conpenſate for all, and annihilate the ſufferings of ten thouſand years.

But hark! another ſentence breaks from the mouth of the angry Judge, like vengeful thunder. Nature gives a deep tremendous groan; the heavens lower and gather blackneſs, the earth trembles, and guilty millions ſink with horror at the ſound! And ſee! he whoſe words are works, whoſe fiat produced worlds out of nothing; he who could remand ten thouſand worlds into nothing with a frown; he whoſe thunder quelled the inſurrection of rebel-angels in heaven, and hurled them head-long down, down, down to the dungeon of hell; ſee, he turns to the guilty croud on his left hand; his angry countenance diſcovers the righteous indignation that glows in his breaſt:—his countenance beſpeaks him inexorable, and that there is now no room for prayers and tears. Now the ſweet, mild, mediatorial hour is paſt, and nothing appears but the majeſty and terror of the Judge. Horror and darkneſs frown upon his brows; and vindictive lightnings flaſh from his eyes. And now (O! who can bear the ſound!) he ſpeaks, *Depart from me ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* O! the cutting emphaſis of every word! Depart! depart from Me; from Me, the Author of all good, the Fountain of all good, the Fountain of all happineſs. Depart, with all my heavy all-conſuming curſe upon you. Depart into fire, into everlaſting, into everlaſting fire, prepared, furniſhed with fuel, and blown up into rage, prepared for the devil and his angels; once your companions in ſin, and now the companions and the executioners of your puniſhment.

Now the grand period is arrived in which the final everlaſting ſtates of mankind are unchangeably ſettled. From this all important æra their happineſs or miſery runs on in one uniform, uninterrupted tenor; no change, no gradation, but from glory to glory, in the ſcale

ſcale of perfection, or from gulph to gulph in hell. This is the day in which all the ſchemes of Providence, carried on for thouſands of years, terminate.

> " Great day! for which all other days were made :
> For which earth roſe from chaos ; man from earth ;
> And an eternity, the date of gods,
> Deſcended on poor earth-created man !"— YOUNG.

Time was ; but is no more ! Now all the ſons of men enter upon a duration not to be meaſured by the revolutions of the ſun, nor by days, and months, and years. Now eternity dawns, a day that ſhall never ſee an evening. And this terribly illuſtrious morning is ſolemnized with the execution of the ſentence. No ſooner is it paſſed than immediately the wicked *go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal.* Matt. xxv. 46. See the aſtoniſhed thunder-ſtruck multitude on the left hand, with ſullen horror, and grief, and deſpair in their looks, writhing with agony, crying and wringing their hands, and glancing a wiſhful eye towards that heaven which they loſt ; dragged away by devils to the place of execution ! See hell expands her voracious jaws, and ſwallows them up ! and now an eternal farewell to earth and all its enjoyments ! Farewell to the cheerful light of Heaven ! Farewell to hope, that ſweet relief of affliction !

> ——" Farewell happy fields,
> Where joy for ever dwells ! Hail horrors ! hail
> Infernal world ! and thou profoundeſt hell,
> Receive thy new poſſeſſors !" MILTON.

Heaven frowns upon them from above, the horrors of hell ſpread far and wide around them, and conſcience within preys upon their hearts. Conſcience ! O thou abuſed, exaſperated power, that now ſleepeſt in ſo many breaſts, what ſevere, ample revenge wilt thou then take upon thoſe that now dare to do thee violence ! O the dire reflections which memory will then ſuggeſt ! the remembrance of mercies abuſed !

of

of a Saviour ſlighted! of means and opportunities of ſalvation neglected and loſt! this remembrance will ſting the heart like a ſcorpion. But O eternity! eternity! with what horror will thy name circulate thro' the vaults of hell! eternity in miſery! no end to pain! no hope of an end! O this is the hell of Hell! this is the parent of deſpair! deſpair the direſt ingredient of miſery, the moſt tormenting paſſion which devils feel.—But let us view a more delightful and illuſtrious ſcene.

See the bright and triumphant army marching up to their eternal home, under the conduct of the Captain of their ſalvation, where they *ſhall ever be with the Lord*, 1 Theſſ. iv. 17. as happy as their nature in its higheſt improvements is capable of being made. With what ſhouts of joy and triumph do they aſcend! with what ſublime hallelujahs do they crown their Deliverer! with what wonder and joy, with what pleaſing horror, like one that has narrowly eſcaped ſome tremendous precipice, do they look back upon what they once were! once mean, guilty, depraved, condemned ſinners! afterward imperfect, broken-hearted, ſighing, weeping ſaints! but now innocent, holy, happy, glorious immortals!

> "Are theſe the forms that moulder'd in the duſt?
> O the tranſcendant glories of the juſt!" YOUNG.

Now with what pleaſure and rapture do they look forward through the long, long proſpect of immortality, and call it their own! the duration not only of their exiſtence, but of their happineſs and glory! O ſhall any of us ſhare in this immenſely valuable privilege! how immenſely tranſporting the thought!

> Shall we, who ſome few years ago were leſs
> Than worm, or mite, or ſhadow can expreſs;
> Were nothing; ſhall we live, when every fire
> Of every ſtar ſhall languiſh or expire?
> When earth's no more, ſhall we ſurvive above,
> And through the ſhining ranks of angels move?
> Or, as before the throne of God we ſtand,
> See new worlds rolling from his mighty hand?—

All

All that has being in full concert join,
And celebrate the depths of love divine! YOUNG.

O what exploits, what miracles of power and grace, are theſe! But why do I darken ſuch ſplendors with words without knowledge? The language of mortals was formed for lower deſcriptions. *Eye hath not ſeen, ear has not heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath laid up for them that love him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

And now when the inhabitants of our world, for whoſe ſake it was formed, are all removed to other regions, and it is left a wide extended deſert, what remains, but that it alſo meet its fate? It is fit ſo guilty a globe, that had been the ſtage of ſin for ſo many thouſands of years, and which even ſupported the croſs on which its Maker expired, ſhould be made a monument of the divine diſpleaſure, and either be laid in ruins, or refined by fire. And ſee! the univerſal blaze begins! *the heavens paſs away with a great noiſe; the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth and the works that are therein are burnt up.* 2 Pet. iii. 10. Now ſtars ruſh from their orbits; comets glare; the earth trembles with convulſions; the Alps, the Andes, and all the lofty peaks or long extended ridges of mountains burſt out into ſo many burning Ætnas, or thunder, and lighten, and ſmoke, and flame, and quake like Sinai, when God deſcended upon it to publiſh his fiery law! Rocks melt and run down in torrents of flame; rivers, lakes, and oceans boil and evaporate. Sheets of fire and pillars of ſmoke, outrageous and inſufferable thunders and lightnings burſt, and bellow, and blaze, and involve the atmoſphere from pole to pole.* The whole globe is now diſſolved into a ſhoreleſs ocean of liquid fire. And where now ſhall we

* See all the formidable ſons of Fire,
Eruptions, Earthquakes, Comets, Lightnings play
Their various engines; all at once diſcharge
Their blazing magazines; and take by ſtorm
This poor terreſtrial citadel of man. YOUNG.

we find the places where cities ſtood, where armies fought, where mountains ſtretched their ridges, and reared their heads on high? Alas! they are all loſt, and have left no trace behind them where they once ſtood. Where art thou, O my country? Sunk with the reſt, as a drop into the burning ocean. Where now are your houſes, your lands, and thoſe earthly poſſeſſions you were once ſo fond of? They are no where to be found. How ſorry a portion for an immortal mind is ſuch a dying world as this! And, O!

> "How rich that God who can ſuch charge defray,
> "And bear to fling ten thouſand worlds away!" YOUNG.

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a view of the ſolemnities of the laſt day which our world ſhall ſee. The view has indeed been but very faint and obſcure: and ſuch will be all our views and deſcriptions of it, till our eyes and our ears teach us better. Through theſe avenues you will at length receive your inſtructions. Yes, brethren, thoſe ears that now hear my voice ſhall hear the all-alarming clangor of the laſt trumpet, the deciſive ſentence from the mouth of the univerſal Judge, and the horrid craſh of falling worlds. Theſe very eyes with which you now ſee one another ſhall yet ſee the deſcending Judge, the aſſembled multitudes, and all the majeſtic phenomena of that day. And we ſhall not ſee them as indifferent ſpectators; no, we are as much concerned in this great tranſaction as any of the children of men. We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat, and receive our ſentence according to the deeds done in the body. And if ſo, what are we doing that we are not more diligently preparing? Why does not the proſpect affect us more? Why does it not tranſport the righteous with *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* 1 Peter i. 8. And why are not the *ſinners in Zion afraid? Why does not fearfulneſs ſurpriſe the hypocrites?* Iſa. xxxiii. 14. Can one of you be careleſs from this hour till you are in readineſs for that tremendous day?

What

What do the ſinners among you now think of repentance? Repentance is the grand preparative for this awful day; and the apoſtle, as I obſerved, mentions the final judgment in my text as a powerful motive to repentance. And what will criminals think of repentance when they ſee the Judge aſcend his throne? Come, ſinners, look forward and ſee the flaming tribunal erected, your crimes expoſed, your doom pronounced, and your hell begun; ſee a whole world demoliſhed, and ravaged by boundleſs conflagration for your ſins! With theſe objects before you, I call you to repent?—I call you! I retract the words: God, the great God whom heaven and earth obey, commands you to repent. Whatever be your characters, whether rich or poor, old or young, white or black, wherever you ſit or ſtand, this command reaches you; *for God now commandeth all men every were to repent.* You are this day firmly bound to this duty by his authority. And dare you diſobey with the proſpect of all the awful ſolemnities of judgment before you in ſo near a view? O! methinks I have now brought you into ſuch a ſituation, that the often-repeated but hitherto neglected call to repentance will be regarded by you. Repent you muſt, either upon earth or in hell. You muſt either ſpend your time or your eternity in repentance. It is abſolutely unavoidable. Putting it off now does not remove the neceſſity, but will only render it the more bitter and ſevere hereafter. Which then do you chooſe? the tolerable, hopeful, medicinal repentance of the preſent life, or the intolerable, unprofitable, deſpairing repentance of hell? Will you chooſe to ſpend time or eternity in this melancholy exerciſe? O! make the choice which God, which reaſon, which ſelf-intereſt, which common ſenſe recommend to you. Now repent at the command of God, *becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given you all full aſſurance in that he raiſed him from the dead.* Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

LUKE x. 41, 42. *And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.*

FOR what are we placed in this world? Is it to dwell here always? You cannot think ſo, when the millions of mankind that have appeared upon the ſtage of time are ſo many inſtances of the contrary. The true notion therefore of the preſent ſtate is, that it is a ſtate of preparation and trial for the eternal world; a ſtate of education for our adult age. As children are ſent to ſchool, and youth bound out to trades, to prepare them for buſineſs, and qualify them to live in the world, ſo we are placed here to prepare us for the grand buſineſs of immortality, the ſtate of our maturity, and to qualify us to live for ever. And is there an heaven of the moſt perfect happineſs, and an hell of the moſt exquiſite miſery, juſt before us, perhaps not a year or even a day diſtant from us? And is it the great deſign, the buſineſs and duty of the preſent ſtate, to obtain the one and eſcape the other? Then what are we doing? What is the world doing all around us? Are they acting as it becomes candidates for eternity? Are they indeed making that the principal object of their moſt zealous endeavours, which is the grand deſign, buſineſs and duty of the preſent ſtate? Are they minding this at all adventures whatever elſe they neglect? This is what we might expect from them as reaſonable creatures, as creatures that love themſelves,

ſelves, and have a ſtrong innate deſire of happineſs. This a ſtranger to our world might charitably preſume concerning them. But, alas! look upon the conduct of the world around you, or look nearer home, and where you are more nearly intereſted, upon your own conduct, and you will ſee this is not generally the caſe. No; inſtead of purſuing the one thing needful, the world is all in motion, all buſtle and hurry, like ants upon a mole-hill, about other affairs. They are in a ſtill higher degree than officious Martha, *careful and troubled about many things*. Now to recal you from this endleſs variety of vain purſuits and direct your endeavours to the proper object, I can think of no better expedient than to explain and inculcate upon you the admonition of Chriſt to Martha, and his commendation of Mary upon this head.

Martha was the head of a little family, probably a widow, in a village near Jeruſalem, called Bethany. Her brother and ſiſter, Lazarus and Mary, lived along with her. And what is remarkable concerning this little family is, that they were all lovers of Jeſus: and their love was not without returns on his ſide; for we are expreſsly told that *Jeſus loved Martha, and her ſiſter, and Lazarus*.—What an happy family is this! but O how rare in the world! This was a convenient place of retirement to Jeſus, after the labours and fatigues of his miniſtry in the city: and here we often find him. Though ſpent and exhauſted with his public ſervices, yet when he gets into the circle of a few friends in a private houſe, he cannot be idle: he ſtill inſtructs them with his heavenly diſcourſe; and his converſation is a conſtant ſermon. Mary, who was paſſionately devout and eager for inſtruction, would not let ſuch a rare opportunity ſlip, but ſits down at the feet of this great Teacher, which was the poſture of the Jewiſh pupils before their maſters, * and eagerly catches every word from his lips;

* Hence St. Paul's expreſſion, that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

from which dropt knowledge ſweeter than honey from the honey-comb. Though ſhe is ſolicitous for the comfort of her heavenly gueſt, yet ſhe makes no great ſtir to provide for him an elegant or ſumptuous entertainment; for ſhe knew his happineſs did not conſiſt in luxurious eating and drinking: it was his *meat and his drink to do the will of his Father;* and as for the ſuſtenance of his body, plain food was moſt acceptable to him. He was not willing that any ſhould loſe their ſouls by loſing opportunities of inſtruction, while they were making ſumptuous proviſion for him. Mary was alſo ſo deeply engaged about her ſalvation, that ſhe was nobly careleſs about the little decencies of entertainments. The body and all its ſupports and gratifications appeared of very ſmall importance to her when compared with the immortal ſoul. O! if that be but fed with the words of eternal life, it is enough. All this ſhe did with Chriſt's warm approbation, and therefore her conduct is an example worthy of our imitation: and if it were imitated it would happily reform the pride, luxury, exceſſive delicacy, and multiform extravagance which have crept in upon us under the ingratiating names of politeneſs, decency, hoſpitality, good œconomy, and I know not what. Theſe guilty ſuperfluities and refinements render the life of ſome a courſe of idolatry to ſo ſordid a god as their bellies, and that of others a courſe of buſy, laborious, and expenſive trifling.—But to return:

Martha, though a pious woman, yet like too many among us, was too ſolicitous about theſe things. She ſeemed more concerned to maintain her reputation for good œconomy and hoſpitality than to improve in divine knowledge at every opportunity; and to entertain her gueſt rather as a gentleman than as a divine teacher and the Saviour of ſouls. Hence, inſtead of ſitting at his feet with her ſiſter in the poſture of a humble diſciple, ſhe was buſy in making preparations; and her mind was diſtracted with the cares

cares of her family. As moderate labour and care about earthly things is lawful, and even a duty, perſons are not readily ſuſpicious or eaſily convinced of their guilty exceſſes in theſe labours and cares. Hence Martha is ſo far from condemning herſelf on this account, that ſhe blames her devout ſiſter for not following her example. Nay, ſhe has the confidence to complain to Chriſt himſelf of her neglect, and that in language too that ſounds ſomewhat rude and irreverent. "Careſt thou not that my ſiſter hath left me to ſerve alone?" Art thou ſo partial as to ſuffer her to devolve all the trouble upon me while ſhe ſits idle at thy feet?

Jeſus turns upon her with juſt ſeverity, and throws the blame where it ſhould lie. *Martha, Martha!* There is a vehemence and pungency in the repetition, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.* "Thy worldly mind has many objects, and many objects excite many cares and troubles, fruitleſs troubles and uſeleſs cares. Thy reſtleſs mind is ſcattered among a thouſand things, and toſſed from one to another with an endleſs variety of anxieties. But let me collect my thoughts and cares to one point, a point where they ſhould all terminate: *one thing is needful;* and therefore dropping thy exceſſive care about many things, make this one thing the great object of thy purſuit. This one thing is what thy ſiſter is now attending to, while thou art vainly careful about many things; and therefore, inſtead of blaming her conduct, I muſt approve it. She has made the beſt choice, for ſhe *hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.* After all thy care and labour, the things of this vain world muſt be given up at laſt, and loſt for ever. But Mary hath made a wiſer choice, the portion ſhe hath choſen ſhall be hers for ever; it ſhall never be taken away from her."

But what does Chriſt mean by this one thing which alone is needful?

I anſwer,

I anſwer, We may learn what he meant by the occaſion and circumſtances of his ſpeaking. He mentions this one thing in an admonition to Martha for exceſſive worldly care and the neglect of an opportunity for promoting her ſalvation; and he expreſsly oppoſes this one thing to the many things which engroſſed her care; and therefore it muſt mean ſomething different from and ſuperior to all the purſuits of time. This one thing is that which Mary was ſo much concerned about while attentively liſtening to his inſtructions. And what can that be but ſalvation as the end, and holineſs as the means, or a proper care of the ſoul? This is that which is oppoſite and ſuperior to the many cares of life:—this is that which Mary was attending to and purſuing: and I may add, this is that good part which Mary had choſen, which ſhould never be taken away from her; for that good part which Mary had choſen ſeems intended by Chriſt to explain what he meant by the one thing needful. Therefore the one thing needful muſt mean the ſalvation of the ſoul, and an earneſt application to the means neceſſary to obtain this end above all other things in the world. To be holy in order to be happy; to pray, to hear, to meditate, and uſe all the means of grace appointed to produce or cheriſh holineſs in us; to uſe theſe means with conſtancy, frequency, earneſtneſs, and zeal; to uſe them diligently whatever elſe be neglected, or to make all other things give way in compariſon of this; this I apprehend is the one thing needful which Chriſt here intends: this is that which is abſolutely neceſſary, neceſſary above all other things, and neceſſary for ever. The end, namely, ſalvation, will be granted by all to be neceſſary, and the neceſſity of the end renders the means alſo neceſſary. If it be neceſſary you ſhould be for ever happy, and eſcape everlaſting miſery, it is neceſſary you ſhould be holy; for you can no more be ſaved without holineſs than you can be healthy without health, ſee without light, or live without

without food. And if holineſs be neceſſary, then the earneſt uſe of the means appointed for the production and improvement of holineſs in us muſt be neceſſary too; for you can no more expect to become holy without the uſe of theſe means, than to reap without ſowing, or become truly virtuous and good by chance or fatality. To be holy in order to be happy, and to uſe all the means of grace in order to be holy, is therefore the one thing needful.

But why is this concern which is ſo complex called One Thing?

I anſwer: Though ſalvation and holineſs include various ingredients, and though the means of grace are various, yet they may be all taken collectively and called one thing; that is, one great buſineſs, one important object of purſuit, in which all our endeavours and aims ſhould center and terminate. It is alſo ſaid to be one, in oppoſition to the many things that are the objects of a worldly mind. This world owes its variety in a great meaſure to contradiction and inconſiſtency. There is no harmony or unity in the earthly objects of mens purſuits, nor in the means they uſe to ſecure them. Riches, honours, and pleaſures generally claſh. If a man will be rich he muſt reſtrain himſelf in the pleaſures of gratifying his eager appetites, and perhaps uſe ſome mean artifices that may ſtain his honour. If he would be honourable, he muſt often be prodigal of his riches, and abſtain from ſome ſordid pleaſures. If he would have the full enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſures, he muſt often ſquander away his riches, and injure his honour to procure them. The luſts of men as well as their objects, are alſo various and contradictory. Covetouſneſs and ſenſuality, pride and tranquillity, envy and the love of eaſe, and a thouſand jarring paſſions, maintain a conſtant fight in the ſinner's breaſt. The means for gratifying theſe luſts are likewiſe contrary; ſometimes truth, ſometimes falſhood, ſometimes indolence, ſometimes action and labour are neceſſary. In theſe

theſe things there is no unity of deſign, nor conſiſtency of means; but the ſinner is properly diſtracted, drawn this way and that, toſſed from wave to wave; and there is no ſteadineſs or uniformity in his purſuits. But the work of ſalvation is one, the means and the end correſpond, and the means are conſiſtent one with another; and therefore the whole, though conſiſting of many parts, may be ſaid to be one.

It may alſo be called the one thing needful, to intimate that this is needful above all other things. It is a common form of ſpeech to ſay of that which is neceſſary above all other things, that it is the one or only thing neceſſary: ſo we may underſtand this paſſage. There are what we call the real neceſſaries of life; ſuch as food and raiment: there are alſo neceſſary callings and neceſſary labours. All theſe are neceſſary in a lower ſenſe; neceſſary in their proper place. But in compariſon of the great work of our ſalvation, they are all unneceſſary; if we be but ſaved, we may do very well without them all. This is ſo neceſſary, that nothing elſe deſerves to be called neceſſary in compariſon of it.

This ſhews you alſo, not only why this is called one thing, but why or in what ſenſe it is ſaid to be neceſſary. It is of abſolute and incomparable neceſſity. There is no abſolute neceſſity to our happineſs that we ſhould be rich or honourable; nay, there is no abſolute neceſſity that we ſhould live in this world at all, for we may live infinitely more happy in another. And if life itſelf be not abſolutely neceſſary, then much leſs are food, or raiment, or health, or any of thoſe things which in a lower ſenſe we call the neceſſaries of life. In compariſon of this, they are all needleſs. I add farther, this one thing may be ſaid to be neceſſary, becauſe it is neceſſary always, or for ever. The neceſſaries of this life we cannot want long, for we muſt ſoon remove into a world where there is no room for them; but holineſs and ſalvation we ſhall find needful always: needful under the calamities

calamities of life; needful in the agonies of death; needful in the world of ſpirits; needful millions of ages hence; needful to all eternity; and without it we are eternally undone. This is a neceſſity indeed! a neceſſity, in compariſon of which all other neceſſaries are but ſuperfluities.

I hope by this ſhort explication I have cleared the way through your underſtandings to your hearts, and to your hearts I would now addreſs myſelf. However ſolemnly I may ſpeak upon this intereſting ſubject, you will have more reaſon to blame me for the deficiency than for the exceſs of my zeal and ſolemnity. I hope I have entered this ſacred place to-day with a ſincere deſire to do ſome ſervice to your immortal ſouls before I leave it. And may I not hope you have come here with a deſire to receive ſome advantage? If not, you may number this ſeeming act of religion among the ſins of your life; you have come here to-day to ſin away theſe ſacred hours in hypocriſy, and a profane mockery of the great God. But if you are willing to receive any benefit, hear attentively: hear, that your ſouls may live.

My firſt requeſt to you is, * that you would make this paſſage the teſt of your characters, and ſeriouſly inquire whether you have lived in the world as thoſe that really and practically believe that this is the one thing of abſolute neceſſity? Are not all the joys of heaven and your immortal ſouls worth the little pains of ſeriouſly putting this ſhort queſtion to your conſciences? Review your life, look into your hearts, and inquire, has this one thing lain more upon your hearts than all other things together? Has this been, above all other things, the object of your moſt vehement deſire, your moſt earneſt endeavours, and eager purſuit?

* Many of the following ſentiments, as to the ſubſtance of them, are borrowed from Mr. Baxter's excellent diſcourſe, intitled, A SAINT OR A BRUTE: and I know no better pattern for a miniſter to follow in his addreſs to ſinners than that flaming and ſucceſsful preacher.

purſuit? I do not aſk whether you have heard or read that this one thing is neceſſary, or whether you have ſometimes talked about it. I do not aſk whether you have paid to God the compliment of appearing in his houſe once a week, or of performing him a little lip-ſervice morning and evening in your families, or in your cloſets, after you have ſerved yourſelves and the world all the reſt of your time without one affectionate thought of God. Nor do I inquire whether in a pang of horror after the commiſſion of ſome groſs ſin you have tried to make your conſcience eaſy by a few prayers and tears, of which you form an opiate to caſt you again into a dead ſleep in ſin. I do not aſk whether you have performed many actions that are materially good, and abſtained from many ſins. All this you may have done, and yet have neglected the one thing needful all your lives.

But I aſk you, whether this one thing needful has been habitually uppermoſt in your hearts, the favourite object of your deſires, the prize of your moſt vigorous endeavours, the ſupreme happineſs of your ſouls, and the principal object of your concern above all things in the world? Sirs, you may now hear this queſtion with ſtupid unconcern and indifference; but I muſt tell you, you will find another day how much depends upon it. In that day it will be found that the main difference between true chriſtians and the various claſſes of ſinners is this:—God, Chriſt, holineſs, and the concerns of eternity are habitually uppermoſt in the hearts of the former; but to the latter they are generally but things by the by; and the world engroſſes the vigour of their ſouls, and is the principal concern of their lives. To ſerve God, to obtain his favour, and to be happy for ever in his love, is the main buſineſs of the ſaint, to which all the concerns of the world and the fleſh muſt give way; but to live in eaſe, in reputation, in pleaſure, or riches, or to gratify himſelf in the purſuit and enjoyment

joyment of ſome created good, this is the main concern of the ſinner. The one has made an hearty reſignation of himſelf and all that he is and has to God through Jeſus Chriſt: he ſerves him with the beſt, and thinks nothing too good for him. But the other has his exceptions and reſerves: he will ſerve God willingly, provided it may conſiſt with his eaſe, and pleaſure, and temporal intereſt; he will ſerve God with a bended knee and the external forms of devotion; but with the vigour of his ſpirit he ſerves the world and his fleſh. This is the grand difference between a true chriſtian and the various forms of half-chriſtians and hypocrites. And certainly this is a difference that may be diſcerned. The tenor of a man's practice and the object of his love, eſpecially of his higheſt love and practical eſteem, muſt certainly be very diſtinguiſhable from a thing by the by, and from the object of a languid paſſion or mere ſpeculation. Therefore if you make but an impartial trial, you have reaſon to hope you will make a juſt diſcovery of your true character: or if you cannot make the diſcovery yourſelves, call in the aſſiſtance of others. Aſk not your worldly and ſenſual neighbours, for they are but poor judges, and they will flatter you in ſelf-defence; but aſk your pious friends whether you have ſpoke and acted like perſons that practically made this the one thing needful. They can tell you what ſubject you talked moſt ſeriouſly about, what purſuit ſeemed to lie moſt upon your hearts, and chiefly to exhauſt your activity. Brethren, I beſeech you, by one means or other, to bring this matter to an iſſue, and let it hang in ſuſpence no longer. Why are you ſo indifferent how this matter ſtands with you? Is it becauſe you imagine you may be true chriſtians, and obtain ſalvation however this matter be with you? But be not deceived: no man can ſerve two maſters whoſe commands are contrary; and *ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon* with a ſervice equally devoted to both. *If any man love the world* with ſu-

preme affections, *the love of the Father is not in him.* 1 John ii. 15. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap; if you sow to the flesh, of the flesh you shall reap corruption:* a miserable harvest indeed! *But if you sow to the spirit, you shall of the spirit reap everlasting life.* Gal. vi. 7, 8. Therefore you may be sure that *if you live after the flesh, you shall die;* and that you can never enjoy the one thing needful unless you mind and pursue it above all other things.

But I shall not urge you any farther to try yourselves by this test. I take it for granted the consciences of some of you have determined the matter, and that you are plainly convicted of having hitherto neglected the one thing needful. Allow me then honestly to expose your conduct in its proper colours, and tell you what you have been doing while you were busy about other things, and neglecting this one thing needful.

1. However well you have improved your time for other purposes, you have lost it all, unless you have improved it in securing the one thing needful. The proper notion of time is, that it is a space for repentance. Time is given us to prepare for eternity. If this is done we have lived long enough, and the great end of time and life is answered, whatever else be undone. But if this be undone, you have lived in vain, and all your time is lost, however busily and successfully you have pursued other things. Though you have studied yourselves pale to furnish your minds with knowledge; though you have spent the night and the day in heaping up riches, or climbing up to the pinnacle of honour, and not lost an hour that might be turned to your advantage, yet you have been most wretchedly fooling away your time, and lost it all, if you have not laid it out in securing the one thing needful. And, believe me, time is a precious thing. So it will appear in a dying hour, or in the eternal world, to the greatest spendthrift among

among you. Then, O for a year, or even a week, or a day, to ſecure that one thing which you are now neglecting! And will you now waſte your time while you enjoy it? Shall ſo precious a bleſſing be loſt? By this calculation how many days, how many years, have you loſt for ever? for is not that loſt which is ſpent in croſſing the end for which it was given you? Time was given you to ſecure an eternity of happineſs, but you have ſpent it in adding ſin to ſin, and conſequently in treaſuring up wrath againſt the day of wrath. And is not your time then a thouſand times worſe than loſt? Let me tell you, if you continue in this courſe to the end, you will wiſh a thouſand times either that you never had one hour's time given you, or that you had made a better uſe of it.

2. Whatever elſe you have been doing, you have loſt your labour with your time, if you have not laboured above all things for this one thing needful. No doubt you have been buſy about ſomething all your life; but you might as well have been idle: you have been buſy in doing nothing. You have perhaps toiled through many anxious and laborious days, and your nights have ſhared in the anxieties and labours of your days. But if you have not laboured for the one thing neceſſary, all your labour and all the fruits of it are loſt. Indeed God may have made uſe of you for the good of his church or of your country, as we make uſe of thorns and briars to ſtop a breach, or of uſeleſs wood for firing to warm our families; but as to any laſting and ſolid advantage to yourſelves, all your labour has been loſt.

But this is not all. Not only your ſecular labour is loſt, but all your toil and pains, if you have uſed any in the duties of religion, they are loſt likewiſe. Your reading, hearing, praying, and communicating; all your ſerious thoughts of death and eternity, all your ſtruggles with particular luſts and temptations, all the kind offices you have done to mankind, all are loſt, ſince you have performed them by halves with a lukewarm

lukewarm heart, and have not made the one thing needful your great buſineſs and purſuit. All theſe things will not ſave you; and what is that religion good for which will not ſave your ſouls? What do thoſe religious endeavours avail which will ſuffer you to fall into hell after all? Certainly ſuch religion is vain.

And now, my hearers, do you believe this, or do you not? If you do, will you, dare you ſtill go on in the ſame courſe? If you do not believe it, let me reaſon the matter with you a little. You will not believe that all the labour and pains you have taken all your life have been quite loſt: no, you now enjoy the fruits of them. But ſhew me, now if you can, what you have gotten by all that ſtir you have made that will follow one ſtep beyond the grave, or that you can call your own to-morrow? Where is that ſure immortal acquiſition that you can carry with you into the eternal world? Were you to die this hour, would it afford you any pleaſure to reflect that you have lived a merry life and had a ſatiety of ſenſual pleaſures, or that you have laboured for riches and honours, and perhaps acquired them? will this reflection afford you pleaſure or pain? will this abate the agony of eternal pain, or make up for the loſs of heaven, which you wilfully incurred by an over-eager purſuit of theſe periſhing vanities?

Do you not ſee the extravagant folly, the diſtracted phrenſy of ſuch a conduct? Alas! while you are neglecting the one thing needful, what are you doing but ſpending your time and labour in laborious idleneſs, honourably debaſing yourſelves, delightfully tormenting yourſelves, wiſely befooling yourſelves, and frugally impoveriſhing and ruining yourſelves for ever? A child or an idiot riding upon a ſtaff, building their mimic houſes, or playing with a feather, are not ſo fooliſh as you in your conduct, while you are ſo ſeriouſly purſuing the affairs of time, and neglecting thoſe of eternity. But,

3. This

3. This is not all: All your labour and pains have not only been loſt while you have neglected this one thing, but you have taken pains to ruin yourſelves, and laboured hard all your lives for your own deſtruction. To this you will immediately anſwer, "God forbid we ſhould do any thing to hurt ourſelves! we were far from having any ſuch deſign." But the queſtion is not what was your deſign? but, what is the unavoidable conſequence of your conduct, according to the nature of things, and the unchangeable conſtitution of heaven? Whatever you deſign in going on in ſin, *the wages of ſin is death*, eternal death. You may indulge the carnal mind, and walk after the fleſh, and yet hope no bad conſequence will follow; but God has told you that *to be carnally minded is death*, and that if you live after the fleſh you ſhall die. The robber on the highway has no deſign to be hanged; but this does not render him a jot ſafer. Therefore, deſign what you will, it is certain you are poſitively deſtroying yourſelves while your labours about other things hinder you from purſuing the one thing needful.—And does not this thought ſhock you, that you ſhould be acting the part of enemies againſt yourſelves, the moſt pernicious and deadly enemies to yourſelves in the whole univerſe? No enemy in the whole univerſe could do you that injury without your conſent which you are doing to yourſelves. To tempt you to ſin is all the devil can do; but the temptation alone can do you no injury; it is conſenting to it that ruins you; and this conſent is your own voluntary act. All the devils in hell could not force you to ſin without your conſent, and therefore all the devils in hell do not injure you as you do yourſelves. God has not given them ſo much power over you as he has given you over yourſelves: and this power you abuſe to your own deſtruction.

O! in what a diſtracted ſtate is the world of the ungodly! If any other men be their enemy, how do they reſent it! But they are their own worſt enemies, and

and yet never fall out with themſelves. If another occaſion them a diſappointment in their purſuits, defraud them of an expected good, or lay ſchemes to make them miſerable, what ſullen grudge, what keen revenge, what flaming reſentments immediately riſe in their breaſts againſt him? And yet they are all their lives diſinheriting themſelves of the heavenly inheritance, laying a train to blow up all their own hopes, and heaping a mountain of guilt upon themſelves to ſink them into the bottomleſs pit; and all this while they think they are the beſt friends to themſelves, and conſulting their own intereſt. As for the devil, the common enemy of mankind, they abhor him, and bleſs themſelves from him; but they are worſe to themſelves than devils, and yet never fall out with themſelves for it.

This, ſinners, may ſeem an harſh repreſentation of your conduct, but, alas! it is true. And if it be ſo ſhocking to you to hear it, what muſt it be to be guilty of it! And, O! think what muſt be the conſequences of ſuch a conduct, ſuch unnatural ſuicide!

4. If you have hitherto neglected the one thing needful, you have unmanned yourſelves, acted beneath and contrary to your own reaſon, and in plain terms behaved as if you had been out of your ſenſes. If you have the uſe of your reaſon, it muſt certainly tell you for what it was given to you. And I beſeech you tell me what was it given to you for but to ſerve the God that made you, to ſecure his favour, to prepare for your eternal ſtate, and to enjoy the ſupreme good as your portion? Can you once think your reaſon, that *divinæ particula auræ*, was given you for ſuch low purpoſes as the contrivances, labour and purſuits of this vain life, and to make you a more ingenious ſort of brutes? He was maſter of an unuſual ſhare of reaſon who ſaid, "There is very little difference between having reaſon and having none, if we had nothing to do with it but cunningly to lay up for our food, and make proviſion for this corruptible

tible flesh, and had not another life to mind." Therefore I may safely affirm that you have cast away your reason, and acted as if you were out of your wits, if you have not employed your rational powers in the pursuit of the one thing needful. Where was your reason when your dying flesh was preferred to your immortal spirits? was reason your guide when you chose the trash of this perishing world, and sought it more than the favour of God and all the joys of heaven? Can you pretend to common sense, when you might have had the pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, and a title to heaven secured to you ere now? But you have neglected all, and instead of having a sure title to heaven, or being prepared for it, you are fitted for destruction, and nothing else; and are only waiting for a fever or a flux, or some other executioner of divine vengeance, to cut the thread of life and let you sink to hell by your own weight. Thither you gravitate under the load of sin as naturally as a stone to the center; and you need no other weight to sink you down. What have you done all your life to make a wise man think you truly reasonable? Is that your reason, to be wise to do evil, while to do good you have no knowledge; or to be ingenious and active about the trifles of time, while you neglect that great work for which you were created and redeemed? Can you be wise and yet not consider your latter end? Nay, can you pretend to so much as common sense, while you sell your eternal salvation for the sordid pleasures of a few flying years? Have you common sense, when you will not keep yourselves out of everlasting fire? What can a madman do worse than wilfully destroy himself? And this you are doing every day.

And yet these very persons are proud of their madness, and are apt to fling the charge of folly upon others, especially if they observe some poor weak creatures, though it be but one in five hundred, fall into melancholy, or lose their reason for a time, while they

they are groaning under a ſenſe of ſin, and anxious about their eternal ſtate; then what a clamour againſt religion and preciſeneſs, as the ready way to make people run mad! then they even dare to publiſh their reſolution that they will not read and pore ſo much upon theſe things, leſt it ſhould drive them out of their ſenſes. O miſerable mortals! is it poſſible they ſhould be more dangerouſly mad then they are already! Do you lay out your reaſon, your ſtrength, and time in purſuing vain ſhadows and in feeding a mortal body for the grave, while the important realities of the eternal world, and the ſalvation of your immortal ſouls are forgotten or neglected! Do you ſell your Saviour with Judas for a little money, and change your part in God and heaven for the ſordid pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon! and are you afraid of ſeriouſly reflecting upon this courſe that you may reform it for fear ſuch thoughts ſhould make you mad? What greater madneſs than this can you fear? Will you run from God, from Chriſt, from mercy, from the ſaints, from heaven itſelf, for fear of being mad? Alas! you are mad in the worſt ſenſe already. Will you run to hell to prove yourſelves in your ſenſes? He was a wiſe and good man who ſaid, "Though the loſs of a man's underſtanding is a grievous affliction, and ſuch as I hope God will never lay upon me, yet I had a thouſand times rather go diſtracted to Bedlam with the exceſſive care about my ſalvation, than to be one of you that caſt away the care of your ſalvation for fear of being diſtracted, and will go among the infernal Bedlams into hell for fear of being mad." Diſtraction in itſelf is not a moral evil, but a phyſical, like thoſe diſorders of body from which it often proceeds, and therefore is no object for puniſhment, and had you no capacity of underſtanding you would have a cloak for your ſin; but your madneſs is your crime, becauſe it is voluntary, and therefore you muſt give an account for it to the Supreme Judge.

It

It would be eaſy to offer many more conſiderations to expoſe the abſurdity and danger of your conduct in neglecting the one thing neceſſary; but theſe muſt ſuffice for the preſent hour. And I only deſire you to conſider farther, if this be a juſt view of the conduct of ſuch as are guilty of this neglect, in what a miſerable, pitiable condition is the world in general! I have ſo often tried the utmoſt energy of my own words upon you with ſo little ſucceſs as to many, that I am grown quite weary of them. Allow me therefore for once to borrow the more ſtriking and pungent words of one now in heaven; of one who had more ſucceſs than almoſt any of his cotemporaries or ſucceſſors in the important work of *converting ſinners from the error of their way, and ſaving ſouls from death;* I mean that incomparable preacher Mr. Baxter, who ſowed an immotal ſeed in his pariſh of Kidderminſter, which grows and brings forth fruit to this day. His words have, through the divine bleſſing, been irreſiſtible to thouſands; and O that ſuch of you, my dear hearers, whoſe hearts may have been proof againſt mine, may not be ſo againſt his alſo!

"Look upon this text of ſcripture, ſays he, and look alſo upon the courſe of the earth, and conſider of the diſagreement; and whether it be not ſtill as before the flood, that *all the imaginations of man's heart are evil continually?* Gen. vi. 5. Were it poſſible for a man to ſee the affections and motions of all the world at once, as God ſeeth them, what a pitiful ſight it would be! What a ſtir do they make, alas, poor ſouls! for they know not what! while they forget, or ſlight, or hate the one thing needful. What an heap of gadding ants ſhould we ſee that do nothing but gather ſticks and ſtraws! Look among perſons of every rank, in city and country, and look into families about you, and ſee what trade it is they are moſt buſily driving on, whether it be for heaven or earth? And whether you can diſcern by their care and labours that they underſtand what is the one thing ne-

ceſſary? Theſe are as buſy as bees; but not for honey, but in ſpinning ſuch a ſpider's web as the beſom of death will preſently ſweep down. Job viii. 14. They labour hard; but for what? *For the food that periſheth*, but not for that *which endureth to everlaſting life*. John vi. 27. They are diligent ſeekers; but for what? Not firſt for God, his kingdom and righteouſneſs, but for that which they might have had as an addition to their bleſſedneſs. Matt. vi. 33. They are ſtill doing; what are they doing? Even undoing themſelves by running away from God, to hunt after the periſhing pleaſures of the world. Inſtead of providing for the life to come, they are making *proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil its luſts*. Rom. xiii. 14. Some of them hear the word of God, but they preſently choke it *by the deceitfulneſs of riches and the cares of this life*. Luke viii. 14. They *are careful and troubled about many things;* but the one thing that ſhould be all to them is caſt by as if it were nothing. Providing for the fleſh and minding the world is the employment of their lives. They labour with a canine appetite for their traſh; but to holineſs they have no appetite, and are worſe than indifferent to the things that are indeed deſirable. They have no covetouſneſs for the things which they are commanded *earneſtly to covet*. 1 Cor. xii. 31. They have ſo little hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, that a very little or none will ſatisfy them. Here they are pleading always for moderation, and againſt too much, and too earneſt, and too long; and all is too much with them that is above ſtark nought, or dead hypocriſy; and all is too earneſt and too long that would make religion ſeem a buſineſs, or engage them to ſeem ſerious in their own profeſſion, or put them paſt jeſt in the worſhip of God and the matters of their ſalvation. Let but their children or ſervants neglect their worldly buſineſs (which I confeſs they ſhould not do) and they ſhall hear of it with both their ears; but if they ſin againſt God, or neglect his word or worſhip, they

they ſhall meet with more patience than Eli's ſon did: a cold reproof is uſually the moſt; and it is well if they be not encouraged in their ſin: it is well if a child or ſervant that begins to be ſerious for ſalvation be not rebuked, derided and hindered by them. If on their days of labour they overſleep themſelves, they ſhall be ſure to be called up to work (and good reaſon) but when do they call them up to prayer? when do they urge them to conſider or converſe upon the things that concern their everlaſting life. The Lord's own day, which is appointed to be ſet apart for matters of this nature, is waſted in idleneſs or worldly talk. Come at any time into their company and you may talk enough, and too much of news, or other mens matters, of their worldly buſineſs, ſports and pleaſures, but about God and their ſalvation they have ſo little to ſay, and that ſo heartieſsly and on the by, as if they were things that belonged not to their care and duty, and no whit concerned them. Talk with them about the renovation of the ſoul, the nature of holineſs, and the life to come, and you will find them almoſt as dumb as a fiſh. The moſt underſtand not matters of this nature, nor much deſire or care to underſtand them. If one would teach them perſonally, they are too old to be catechiſed or to learn, though not too old to be ignorant of the matters they were made for and preſerved for in the world. They are too wiſe to learn to be wiſe, and too good to be taught how to be good, though not too wiſe to follow the ſeducements of the devil and the world, nor too good to be the ſlaves of Satan and the deſpiſers and enemies of goodneſs. If they do any thing which they call ſerving God, it is ſome cold and heartleſs uſe of words to make themſelves believe that for all their ſins they ſhall be ſaved; ſo that God will call that a ſerving their ſins and abominations, which they call a ſerving of God. Some of them will confeſs that holineſs is good, but they hope God will be merciful to them without it; and

ſome

ſome do ſo hate it, that it is a diſpleaſing, irkſome thing to them to hear any ſerious diſcourſe of holineſs; and they deteſt and deride thoſe as fanatical, troubleſome preciſians that diligently ſeek the one thing neceſſary: ſo that if the belief of the moſt may be judged by their practices, we may confidently ſay, that they do not practically believe that ever they ſhould be brought to judgment, or that there is any heaven or hell to be expected; and that their confeſſion of the truth of the ſcriptures and the articles of the chriſtian faith are no proofs that they heartily take them to be true. Who can be ſuch a ſtranger to the world as not to ſee that this is the caſe of the greateſt part of men. And, which is worſt of all, they go on in this courſe againſt all that can be ſaid to them, and will give no impartial, conſiderate hearing to the truth, which would recover them to their wits, but live as if it would be a felicity to them in hell to think that they came thither by wilful reſolution, and in deſpite of the remedy."

This, ſinners, is a true repreſentation of your caſe, drawn by one that well knew it and lamented it. And what do you now think of it yourſelves? What do you think will be the conſequence of ſuch a courſe? Is it ſafe to perſiſt in it? or ſhall I be ſo happy as to bring you to a ſtand? Will you ſtill go on, troubling yourſelves with many things? or will you reſolve for the future to mind the one thing needful above all? I beſeech you to come to ſome reſolution. Time is on the wing, and does not allow you to heſitate in ſo plain and important an affair. Do you need any farther excitements? Then I ſhall try the force of one conſideration more contained in my text, and that is Neceſſity.

Remember neceſſity, the moſt preſſing, abſolute neceſſity, enforces this care upon you. One thing is needful, abſolutely needful, always needful, and needful above all other things. This, one would think, is ſuch an argument as cannot but prevail. What exploits

ploits has neceſſity performed in the world! What arts has it diſcovered as the mother of invention! what labours, what fatigues, what ſufferings has it undergone! What dangers has it encountered! What difficulties has it overcome? Neceſſity is a plea which you think will warrant you to do any thing and excuſe any thing. Reaſoning againſt neceſſity is but reaſoning againſt a hurricane; it bears all before it. To obtain the neceſſaries of life, as they are called, how much will men do and ſuffer! Nay, with what hardſhips and perils will they not conflict for things that they imagine neceſſary, not to their life but to their eaſe, their honour, or pleaſure! But what is this neceſſity when compared to that which I am now urging upon you? In compariſon of this, the moſt neceſſary of thoſe things are but ſuperfluities; for if your eaſe, or honour, or pleaſure, or even your life in this world be not abſolutely neceſſary, as they cannot be to the heirs of immortality, then certainly thoſe things which you imagine neceſſary to your eaſe, your honour, your pleaſure, or mortal life, are ſtill leſs neceſſary. But O! to eſcape everlaſting miſery, and to ſecure everlaſting ſalvation, this is the grand neceſſity! This will appear neceſſary in every point of your immortal duration; neceſſary when you have done with this world for ever, and muſt leave all its cares, enjoyments, and purſuits behind you. And ſhall not this grand neceſſity prevail upon you to work out your ſalvation, and make that your great buſineſs, when a far leſs neceſſity, a neceſſity that will laſt but a few years at moſt, ſets you and the world around you upon ſuch hard labours and eager purſuits for periſhing vanities? All the neceſſity in the world is nothing in compariſon of that which lies upon you to work out your ſalvation; and ſhall this have no weight? If you do not labour or contrive for *the bread that periſheth*, you muſt beg or ſtarve? but if you will not labour for the bread that endureth unto everlaſting life, you muſt burn in hell for ever. You muſt

must lie in prison if your debts with men be not paid; but, O! what is it to the prison of hell, where you must be confined for ever if your debts to the justice of God be not remitted, and you do not obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can make satisfaction for them! You must suffer hunger and nakedness unless you take care to provide food and raiment; but you must suffer eternal banishment from God and all the joys of his presence if you do not labour to secure the one thing needful. Without the riches of this world you may be rich in faith and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. Without earthly pleasures you may have joy unspeakable, and full of glory in the love of God, and the expectation of the kingdom reserved in heaven for you. Without health of body you may have happiness of spirit; and even without this mortal life you may enjoy eternal life. Without the things of the world you may live in want for a little while, but then you will soon be upon an equality with the greatest princes. But without this one thing needful you are undone, absolutely undone. Though you were as rich as Crœsus, you *are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Your very being becomes a curse to you. It is your curse that you are a man, a reasonable creature. It had been infinitely better for you if you had been a toad or a snake, and so incapable of sin and of immortality, and consequently of punishment. O then let this grand necessity prevail with you!

I know you have other wants, which you should moderately labour to provide for, but O how small and of how short continuance! If life and all should be lost, you may more than find all in heaven. But if you miss at this one thing, all the world cannot make up the loss.

Therefore, to conclude with the awakening and resistless words of the author I before quoted, "Awake, you sluggish, careless souls! your house over your

your head is in a flame! the hand of God is lifted up! If you love yourselves, prevent the stroke. Vengeance is at your backs, the wrath of God pursues your sin, and wo to you if he find it upon you when he overtaketh you. Away with it speedily! up and begone; return to God! make Christ and mercy your friends in time, if you love your lives! the Judge is coming! for all that you have heard of it so long, yet still you believe it not. You shall shortly see the majesty of his appearance and the dreadful glory of his face; and yet do you not begin to look about you, and make ready for such a day? Yea, before that day, your separated souls shall begin to reap as you have sowed here. Though now the partition that stands between you and the world to come do keep unbelievers strangers to the things that most concern them, yet death will quickly find a portal to let you in: and then, sinners, you will find such doings there as you little thought of, or did not sensibly regard upon earth.—Before your friends will have time enough to wrap up your pale corps in your winding-sheet, you will see and feel that which will tell you to the quick, that one thing was necessary. If you die without this one thing necessary, before your friends can have finished your funerals, your souls will have taken up their places among devils in endless torments and despair, and all the wealth, and honour, and pleasure that the world afforded you will not ease you. This is sad, but it is true, sirs; for God hath spoken it. Up therefore and bestir you for the life of your souls. Necessity will awake even the sluggard. Necessity, we say, will break through stone walls. The proudest will stoop to necessity: the most slothful will bestir themselves in necessity: the most careless will be industrious in necessity: necessity will make men do any thing that is possible to be done. And is not necessity, the highest necessity, your own necessity, able to make you cast away your sins, and take up an holy and heavenly life? O poor souls!

fouls! is there a greater neceſſity of your ſin than of your ſalvation, and of pleaſing your fleſh for a little time than of pleaſing the Lord and eſcaping everlaſting miſery?" O that you would conſider what I ſay! and the Lord give you underſtanding in all things! Amen.

SERMON XXII.

SAINTS SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY, AND THE CERTAIN PERDITION OF SINNERS.

1 PET. iv. 18. *And if the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?*

THIS text may ſound in your ears like a meſſage from the dead; for it is at the requeſt of our deceaſed friend * that I now inſiſt upon it. He knew ſo much from the trials he made in life, that if he ſhould be ſaved at all, it would be with great difficulty, and if he ſhould eſcape deſtruction at all, it would be a very narrow eſcape; and he alſo knew ſo much of this ſtupid, careleſs world, that they ſtood in need of a ſolemn warning on this head; and therefore deſired that his death ſhould give occaſion to a ſermon on this alarming ſubject. But now the unknown wonders of the inviſible world lie open to his eyes; and now alſo he can take a full review of his paſſage through this mortal life; now he ſees the many unſuſpected dangers he narrowly eſcaped, and the many fiery darts of the devil which the ſhield of faith repelled; now, like a ſhip arrived in port, he reviews the rocks and ſhoals he paſſed through, many of which lay under water and out of ſight; and therefore now he is more fully acquainted with the difficulty of ſalvation

* The perſon was Mr. James Hooper; and the Sermon is dated Aug. 21, 1756.

on than ever. And ſhould he now riſe and make his appearance in this aſſembly in the ſolemn and dread attire of an inhabitant of the world of ſpirits, and again direct me to a more proper ſubject, methinks he would ſtill ſtand to his choice, and propoſe it to your ſerious thoughts, that *if the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?*

The apoſtle's principal deſign in the context ſeems to be to prepare the Chriſtians for thoſe ſufferings which he ſaw coming upon them, on account of their religion. *Beloved*, ſays he, *think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though ſome ſtrange thing happened unto you*, verſe 12. *but rejoice inaſmuch as ye are partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings*: it is no ſtrange thing that you ſhould ſuffer on account of your religion in ſuch a wicked world as this, for Chriſt the founder of your religion met with the ſame treatment; and it is enough that the ſervant be as his maſter, ver. 13. only he adviſes them, that if they muſt ſuffer, that they did not ſuffer as malefactors, but only for the name of Chriſt, ver. 14, 15. *But*, ſays he, *if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed*, ver. 16. *for the time is come that judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God.* He ſeems to have a particular view to the cruel perſecution that a little after this was raiſed againſt the chriſtians by the tyrant Nero, and more directly to that which was raiſed againſt them every where by the ſeditious Jews, who were the moſt inveterate enemies of chriſtianity. The dreadful deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which was plainly foretold by Chriſt in the hearing of St. Peter, was now at hand. And from the ſufferings which chriſtians, the favourites of heaven, endured, he infers how much more dreadful the vengeance would be which ſhould fall upon their enemies the infidel Jews. If judgment begin at the houſe of God, his church, what ſhall be the doom of the camp of rebels? If it begin at us chriſtians who obey the goſpel, what ſhall be the end of them that obey it not? Alas! what

ſhall become of them? *Them that obey not the goſpel of God*, is a deſcription of the unbelieving Jews, to whom it was peculiarly applicable; and the apoſtle may have a primary reference to the dreadful deſtruction of their city and nation which was much more ſevere than all the ſufferings the perſecuted chriſtians had then endured. But I ſee no reaſon for confining the apoſtle's view entirely to this temporal deſtruction of the Jews: he ſeems to refer farther to that ſtill more terrible deſtruction that awaits all that obey not the goſpel in the eternal world; that is to ſay, if the children are ſo ſeverely chaſtiſed in this world, what ſhall become of rebels in the world to come, the proper ſtate of retribution? How much more tremendous muſt be their fate!

In the text he carries on the ſame reflection. *If the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?* The righteous is the common character of all good men or true chriſtians; and the ungodly and the ſinner are characters which may include the wicked of all nations and ages. Now, ſays he, "if the righteous be but ſcarcely ſaved, ſaved with great difficulty, juſt ſaved, and no more, where ſhall idolaters and vicious ſinners appear, whoſe character is ſo oppoſite?"

The abrupt and pungent form of expreſſion is very emphatical. *Where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear!* I need not tell you, your own reaſon will inform you: I appeal to yourſelves for an anſwer, for you are all capable of determining upon ſo plain a caſe. *Where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?* Alas! it ſtrikes me dumb with horror to think of it: it is ſo ſhocking and terrible that I cannot bear to deſcribe it. Now they are gay, merry, and rich; but when I look a little forward I ſee them appear in very different circumſtances, and the horror of the proſpect is hardly ſupportable."

St. Peter here ſuppoſes that there is ſomething in the condition and character of a righteous man that renders

renders his ſalvation comparatively eaſy; ſomething from whence we might expect that he will certainly be ſaved, and that without much difficulty: and, on the other hand, that there is ſomething in the oppoſite character and condition of the ungodly and the ſinner that gives us reaſon to conclude that there is no probability at all of their ſalvation while they continue ſuch. But he aſſerts that even the righteous, whoſe ſalvation ſeems ſo likely and comparatively eaſy, is not ſaved without great difficulty; he is juſt ſaved, and that is all: what then ſhall we conclude of the ungodly and the ſinner, whoſe character gives no ground for favourable expectations at all? If our hopes are but juſt accompliſhed, with regard to the moſt promiſing, what ſhall become of thoſe whoſe caſe is evidently hopeleſs? Alas! where ſhall they appear?

The method in which I intend to proſecute our ſubject is this:

I. I ſhall point out the principal difficulties, which even the righteous meet with in the way to ſalvation.

II. I ſhall mention thoſe things in the condition and character of the righteous which render his ſalvation ſo promiſing and ſeemingly eaſy, and then ſhow you that, if with all theſe favourable and hopeful circumſtances he is not ſaved but with great difficulty and danger, thoſe who are of an oppoſite character, and whoſe condition is ſo evidently and apparently deſperate, cannot be ſaved at all.

I. I am to point out the principal difficulties which even the righteous meet with in the way to ſalvation.

Here I would premiſe, that ſuch who have become truly religious and perſevered in the way of holineſs and virtue to the laſt, will meet with no difficulty at all to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. The difficulty does not lie here, for the ſame apoſtle Peter aſſures us, that if we give all diligence *to make our calling and election ſure* we ſhall never fall; but ſo *an entrance ſhall be adminiſtered unto us abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Peter,

2 Peter, i. 10, 11. But the difficulty lies in this, that, all things conſidered, it is a very difficult thing to obtain, and perſevere in real religion in the preſent corrupt ſtate of things, where we meet with ſo many temptations and ſuch powerful oppoſition. Or, in other words, it is difficult in ſuch a world as this to prepare for ſalvation; and this renders it difficult to be ſaved, becauſe we cannot be ſaved without preparation.

It muſt alſo be obſerved that a religious life is attended with the moſt pure and ſolid pleaſures even in this world; and they who chooſe it act the wiſeſt part with reſpect to the preſent ſtate: they are really the happieſt people upon our globe. Yet, were it otherwiſe, the bleſſed conſequences of a religious life in the eternal world would make amends for all, and recommend ſuch a courſe, notwithſtanding the greateſt difficulties and the ſevereſt ſufferings that might attend it.

But notwithſtanding this conceſſion, the chriſtian courſe is full of hardſhips, oppoſitions, trials, and diſcouragements. This we may learn from the metaphorical repreſentations of it in the ſacred writings, which ſtrongly imply that it is attended with difficulties which require the utmoſt exertion of all our power to ſurmount. It is called a warfare, 1 Tim. i. 18. fighting, 2 Tim. iv. 7. The graces of the chriſtian, and the means of begetting and cheriſhing them, are called weapons of war: there is the ſhield of faith; the hope of ſalvation, which is the helmet; the ſword of the ſpirit, which is the word of God. 2 Cor. x. 4. Eph. vi. 13—17. The end of the Chriſtian's courſe is victory after conflict. Rev. ii. 7. And chriſtians are ſoldiers; and as ſuch muſt endure hardſhips. 2 Tim. ii. 3. Now a military life you know is a ſcene of labour, hardſhips, and dangers; and therefore ſo is the chriſtian life, which is compared to it in theſe reſpects. It is compared to a race, Heb. xii. 1, 2. to wreſtling and the other vigorous exerciſes of the Olympic games,

games, Eph. vi. 12. Luke xiii. 24. to walking in a narrow way, Matt. vii. 14. and entering at the ſtrait gate. Luke xiii. 24. This, my brethren, and this only, is the way to ſalvation. And is this the way in which you are walking? Or is it the ſmooth, eaſy, downward road to deſtruction? You may ſlide along that without exertion or difficulty, like a dead fiſh ſwimming with the ſtream; but, O! look before you, and ſee whither it leads!

The enemies that oppoſe our religious progreſs are the devil, the world, and the fleſh. Theſe form a powerful alliance againſt our ſalvation, and leave no artifice untried to obſtruct it.

The things of the world, though good in themſelves, are temptations to ſuch depraved hearts as ours. Riches, honours, and pleaſure ſpread their charms, and tempt us to the purſuit of flying ſhadows, to the neglect of the one thing needful. Theſe engroſs the thoughts and concern, the affections and labours of multitudes. They engage with ſuch eagerneſs in an exceſſive hurry of buſineſs and anxious care, or ſo debauch and ſtupify themſelves with ſenſual pleaſures, that the voice of God is not heard, the clamours of conſcience are drowned, the ſtate of their ſouls is not enquired into, the intereſt of eternity are forgotten, the eternal God, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell are caſt out of mind, and diſregarded; and they care not for any or all of theſe important realities, if they can but gratify the luſt of avarice, ambition, and ſenſuality. And are ſuch likely to perform the arduous work of ſalvation? No; they do not ſo much as ſeriouſly attempt it. Now theſe things which are fatal to multitudes throw great difficulties in the way even of the righteous man. He finds it hard to keep his mind intent upon his great concern in the midſt of ſuch labours and cares as he is obliged to engage in; and frequently he feels his heart eſtranged from God and enſnared into the ways of ſin, his devotion cooled, and his whole ſoul diſordered by

by these allurements. In short, he finds it one of the hardest things in the world to maintain an heavenly mind in such an earthly region, a spiritual temper among so many carnal objects.

The men of this world also increase his difficulties. Their vain, trifling, or wicked conversation, their ensnaring examples, their persuasions, false reasonings, reproaches, menaces, and all their arts of flattery and terror, have sometimes a very sensible effect upon him. These would draw him into some guilty compliances, damp his courage, and tempt him to apostatize, were he not always upon his guard; and sometimes in an inadvertent hour he feels their fatal influence upon him. As for the generality, they yield themselves up to these temptations, and make little or no resistance; and thus are carried down the stream into the infernal pit. Alas! how many ruin themselves through a base, unmanly complaisance, and a servile conformity to the mode! Believe it, sirs, to be fashionably religious and no more, is to be really irreligious in the sight of God. The way of the multitude may seem easy, pleasant and sociable; but, alas! my brethren, see where it ends! it leadeth down into destruction. Matt. vii. 14.

But, in the next place, the greatest difficulty in our way arises from the corruption and wickedness of our own hearts. This is an enemy within; and it is this that betrays us into the hands of our enemies without. When we turn our eyes to this quarter, what vast difficulties rise in our way! difficulties which are impossibilities to us, unless the almighty power enables us to surmount them. Such are a blind mind, ignorant of divine things, or that can speculate only upon them, but does not see their reality and dread importance; a mind empty of God and full of the lumber and vanities of this world. Such are a hard heart, insensible of sin, insensible of the glory of God, and the beauties of holiness, and the infinite moment of eternal things. Such are an heart disaffected

to

to God and his ſervice, bent upon ſin, and impatient of reſtraint. Such are wild, unruly paſſions thrown into a ferment by every trifle, raiſed by vanities, erroneous in the choice of objects, irregular in their motions, and extravagant in the degree of attachment. Such difficulties are ſtrong ungovernable luſts and appetites in animal nature, eager for gratification, and turbulent under reſtraint. And how ſtrangely does this inward corruption indiſpoſe men for religion! Hence their ignorance, their ſecurity, careleſſneſs, preſumptuous hopes, and impenitence. Hence their unwillingneſs to admit conviction, their reſiſtance to the holy ſpirit and their own conſciences, their love of eaſe and impatience of ſorrow for ſin, and of ſolicitude about their eternal ſtate. Hence their contempt of the goſpel, their diſregard to all religious inſtructions, their neglect of the means of grace, and the ordinances of Chriſt, or their careleſs, formal, lukewarm attendance upon them. Hence their earthly-mindedneſs, their ſenſuality, and exceſſive love of animal pleaſures. Hence it is ſo difficult to awaken them to a juſt ſenſe of their ſpiritual condition, and to ſuitable earneſtneſs in their religious endeavours: and hence their fickleneſs and inconſtancy, their relapſes and backſlidings, when they have been a little alarmed. Hence it is ſo difficult to bring their religious impreſſions to a right iſſue, and to lead them to Jeſus Chriſt as the only Saviour. In ſhort, hence it is that ſo many thouſands periſh amidſt the means of ſalvation. Theſe difficulties prove eventually inſuperable to the generality; and they never ſurmount them. But even the righteous, who is daily conquering them by the aid of divine grace, and will at laſt be more than a conqueror, he ſtill finds many hinderances and diſcouragements from this quarter. The remains of theſe innate corruptions ſtill cleave to him in the preſent ſtate, and theſe render his progreſs heavenward ſo ſlow and heavy. Theſe render his life a conſtant warfare, and he is obliged to fight his way through,

through. These frequently check the aspirations of his soul to God, cool his devotion, damp his courage, ensnare his thoughts and affections to things below, and expose him to the successful attacks of temptation. Alas! it is his innate corruption that involves him in darkness and jealousies, in tears and terrors, after hours of spiritual light, joy and confidence. It is this that banishes him from the comfortable presence of his God, and causes him to go mourning without the light of his countenance. Were it not for this, he would glide along through life easy and unmolested; he would find the ways of religion to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. In short, it is this that lies upon his heart as the heaviest burden, and renders his course so rugged and dangerous. And such of you as do not know this by experience, know nothing at all of true experimental christianity.

Finally, the devil and his angels are active, powerful and artful enemies to our salvation: their agency is often unperceived, but it is insinuating, unsuspected, and therefore the more dangerous and successful. These malignant spirits present ensnaring images to the imagination, and no doubt blow the flame of passion and appetite. They labour to banish serious thoughts from the mind, and entertain it with trifles. They give force to the attacks of temptations from the world, and raise and foment insurrections of sin within. And if they cannot hinder the righteous man from entering upon a religious course, or divert him from it, they will at least render it as difficult, laborious, and uncomfortable to him as possible.

See, my brethren, see the way in which you must walk if you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. In this rugged road they have all walked who are now safe arrived at their journey's end, the land of rest. They were saved, but it was with great difficulty: they escaped the fatal rocks and shoals, but it was a very narrow escape: and methinks it is with a kind of pleasing horror they now review the numerous dangers

dangers through which they paſſed, many of which they did not perhaps ſuſpect till they were over. * And is this the way in which you are walking? Is your religion a courſe of watchfulneſs, labour, conflict, and vigorous exertion? Are you indeed in earneſt in it above all things in this world? Or are not many of you lukewarm Laodiceans and indifferent Gallios about theſe things? Your religion (if it may be ſo called) is a courſe of ſecurity, careleſſneſs, ſloth, and formality. Alas! if all the vigour and exertion of the righteous man be but juſt ſufficient for his ſalvation, where, O where ſhall you appear? Which leads me,

II. To mention thoſe things in the character and condition of the righteous which render his ſalvation ſo promiſing and ſeemingly eaſy, and then ſhew that if with all thoſe hopeful circumſtances he ſhall not be ſaved but with great difficulty, that they whoſe character is directly oppoſite, and has nothing encouraging in it, cannot poſſibly be ſaved at all. And this head I ſhall caſt into ſuch a form as to exemplify the text.

1. If thoſe that abſtain from immorality and vice be but ſcarcely ſaved, where ſhall the vicious, profligate ſinner appear?

It is the habitual character of a righteous man to be temperate and ſober, chaſte, juſt, and charitable; to revere the name of God and every thing ſacred, and religiouſly obſerve the holy hours devoted to the ſervice of God. This is always an eſſential part of his character, though not the whole of it. Now ſuch a man looks promiſing; he evidently appears ſo far

* There, on a green and flow'ry mount,
Their weary ſouls now ſit;
And with tranſporting joys recount
The labours of their feet.
Eternal glories to the King
That brought them ſafely thro';
Their lips ſhall never ceaſe to ſing,
And endleſs praiſe renew.

prepared for the heavenly ſtate, becauſe he is ſo far conformed to the law of God, and free from thoſe enormities which are never found in the region of happineſs. And if ſuch ſhall ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall thoſe of the oppoſite character appear? Where ſhall the brute of a drunkard, the audacious ſwearer, the ſcoffer at religion, the unclean, lecherous wretch, the liar, the defrauder, the thief, the extortioner, the Sabbath-breaker, the reveller, where ſhall theſe appear? Are theſe likely to ſtand in the congregation of the righteous, or to appear in the preſence of God with joy? Is there the leaſt likelihood that ſuch ſhall be ſaved? If you will regard the authority of an inſpired apoſtle in the caſe, I can direct you to thoſe places where you may find his expreſs determination. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.* So Gal. v. 19—21. *The works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, hereſies, ſeditions, envyings, revellings, and ſuch like; of the which I tell you before;* that is, I honeſtly forewarn you, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Rev. xxi. 8. *The fearful* (that is, the cowardly in the cauſe of religion) *the unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and all liars, ſhall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone.* You ſee, my brethren, the declarations of the ſcripture are expreſs enough and repeated on this point. And are there not ſome of you here who indulge yourſelves in one or other of theſe vices, and yet hope to be ſaved in that courſe? that is, you hope your Bible and your religion too are falſe; for it is only on that ſuppoſition that your hope of ſalvation can be accompliſhed. Alas! will you

you venture your eternal All upon the truth of such a blasphemous supposition as this? But,

2. If those that conscientiously perform the duties of religion be scarcely saved, where shall the neglecters of them appear?

The righteous are characterized as persons that honestly endeavour to perform all the duties they owe to God. They devoutly read and hear his word, and make divine things their study; they are no strangers to the throne of grace; they live a life of prayer in their retirements, and in a social capacity. They make their families little churches, in which divine worship is solemnly performed. Let others do as they will; as for them and their houses, like Joshua, *they will serve the Lord.* Joshua xxiv. 15. They gratefully commemorate the sufferings of Christ, and give themselves up to him at his table; and seriously improve all the ordinances of the gospel. In short, like Zecharias and Elizabeth, they *walk in all the statutes and ordinances of God blameless.* Luke i. 6. This is their prevailing habitual character. And there is something in this character that gives reason to presume they will be saved; for they now have a relish for the service of God, in which the happiness of heaven consists: they are training up in the humble forms of devotion in the church below, for the more exalted employments of the church trumphant on high. Now if persons of this character are but *scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly appear*, who persist in the wilful neglect of these known duties of religion? Can they be saved, who do not so much as use the means of salvation? Can those that do not study their Bible, the only directory to eternal life, expect to find the way thither! Can prayerless souls receive answers to prayer? Will all the bliss of heaven be thrown away upon such as do not think it worth their while importunately to ask it? Are they likely to be admitted into the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, who do not endeavour to make

their

their families little circles of religion here upon earth? In a word, are they likely to join for ever in the devotions of the heavenly state, who do not accustom themselves to these sacred exercises in this preparatory state? Will you venture your souls upon it that you shall be saved, notwithstanding these improbabilities, or rather impossibilities? Alas! are they any of you that have no better hopes of heaven than these? Where then will you appear?

3. If they that are more than externally moral and religious in their conduct; that have been born again, created in Christ Jesus to good works, as every man that is truly righteous has been: if such, I say, be but scarcely saved, where shall they appear who rest in their mere outward morality, their proud self-righteous virtue, and their religious formalities, and have never been made new creatures, never had the inward principle of action changed by the power of God, and the inbred disorders of the heart rectified? Where shall they appear who have nothing but a self-sprung religion, the genuine offspring of degenerate nature, and never had a supernatural principle of grace implanted in their souls? Has that solemn asseveration of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, lost all its force, and become falsehood in our age and country? *Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3. Is there no weight in such apostolic declarations as these? *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new:* and all these new things are of God. 2 Cor. v. 17. *Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*, Gal. vi. 15. that is to say, a conformity to the rituals of the Jewish or Christian religion availeth nothing, but the new creature. Can men flatter themselves they shall be saved by the Christian religion, in opposition to these plain, strong and repeated declarations of the Christian revelation? And yet are there not many here who are entirely ignorant of this

this renovation of the temper of their mind, of this inward heaven-born religion?

4. If they that are ſtriving to enter in at the ſtrait gate, and preſſing into the kingdom of heaven, do but juſt obtain admiſſion; if they who forget the things that are behind, and reach after theſe that are before them, and preſs with all their might towards the goal, do ſcarcely obtain the prize, what ſhall become of thoſe lukewarm, careleſs, formal, preſumptuous profeſſors of chriſtianity who are ſo numerous among us? Where ſhall they appear who have *but a form of godlineſs without the power*, 2 Tim. iii. 5. and have no ſpiritual life in their religion, *but only a name to live?* Rev. iii. 1. If thoſe whoſe hearts are habitually ſolicitous about their eternal ſtate, who labour in earneſt for the immortal bread, who pray with unutterable groans, Rom. viii. 26. who in ſhort make the care of their ſouls the principal buſineſs of their life, and in ſome meaſure proportion their induſtry and earneſtneſs to the importance and difficulty of the work; if ſuch are but ſcarcely ſaved with all their labour and pains, where ſhall they appear who are at eaſe in Zion, Amos vi. 1. whoſe religion is but a mere indifferency, a thing by the by with them? If we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven unleſs our righteouſneſs exceed that of the Scribes and the Phariſees, Matt. v. 20. where ſhall they appear whoſe righteouſneſs is far ſhort of theirs? And are there not many ſuch in this aſſembly? Alas! my brethren, where do you expect to appear?

5. If they that have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, which is the grand condition of ſalvation, be but ſcarcely ſaved, where ſhall the unbeliever appear?

Faith in Chriſt is an eſſential ingredient in the character of a righteous man: and faith cannot be implanted in our hearts till we have been made deeply ſenſible of our ſins, of our condemnation by the law of God, and our utter inability to procure pardon and ſalvation by the merit of our repentance, refor-

reformation, or any thing we can do. And when we are reduced to this extremity, then we shall listen with eager ears to the proposal of a Saviour. And when we see his glory and sufficiency, and cast our guilty souls upon him, when we submit to his commands, depend entirely upon his atonement, and give up ourselves to God through him, then we believe. Now if they who thus believe, to whom salvation is so often ensured, be not saved but with great difficulty, where shall those appear who never have experienced those exercises which are the antecedents or constituents of saving faith? who have never seen their own guilt and helplessness in an affecting light; who have never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; who have never submitted to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and who do not live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God? Alas! are they likely to be saved who are destitute of the grand prerequisite of salvation? And yet is not this the melancholy case of some of you? You may not be avowed unbelievers; you may believe there is one God, and that Jesus is the true Messiah: in this you do well, but still it is no mighty attainment, for the devils also believe and tremble, and you may have this speculative faith, and yet be wholly destitute of the faith of the operation of God, the precious faith of God's elect; that faith which purifies the heart, produces good works, and unites the soul to Jesus Christ. Certainly the having or not having of such a faith must make a great difference in a man's character, and must be followed by a proportionally different doom. And if they that have it be but scarcely saved, I appeal to yourselves, can they be saved at all who have it not?

6. If true penitents be scarcely saved, where shall the impenitent appear?

It is the character of the righteous that he is deeply affected with sorrow for his sins in heart and practice; that he hates them without exception with an implacable

implacable enmity; that he ſtrives againſt them, and would reſiſt them even unto blood; that his repentance is attended with reformation, and that he forſakes thoſe things for the commiſſion of which his heart is broken with ſorrows. Now repentance appears evidently to the common reaſon of mankind an hopeful preparative for acceptance with God and eternal happineſs: and therefore if they who repent are ſaved with great difficulty, where ſhall they appear who perſiſt impenitent in ſin? Where ſhall they appear who have hard unbroken hearts in their breaſts, who are inſenſible of the evil of ſin, who indulge themſelves in it, and cannot be perſuaded to forſake it? Can you be at any loſs to know the doom of ſuch, after Chriſt has told us with his own lips, which never pronounced an harſh cenſure, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* Luke xiii. 3, 5. And are there not ſome of this character in this aſſembly? Alas! there is not the leaſt likelihood, or even poſſibility of your ſalvation in ſuch a condition.

7. The righteous man has the love of God ſhed abroad in his heart, and it produces the uſual ſentiments and conduct of love towards him. God is dearer to him than all other things in heaven and earth; the *ſtrength of his heart, and* his *portion for ever.* Pſalm lxxiii. 25, 26. His affectionate thoughts fix upon him, Pſalm lxiii. 6. he rejoices in the light of his countenance, Pſalm iv. 7. and longs and languiſhes for him in his abſence. Pſalm xlii. 1, 2. and lxiii. 1. Cant. iii. 1. His love is a powerful principle of willing obedience, and carries him to keep his commandments. 1 John v. 3. He delights in the law and ſervice of God, and in communion with him in his ordinances. Now ſuch a principle of love is a very hopeful preparative for heaven, the region of love, and for the enjoyment of God. Such an one would take pleaſure in him and in his ſervice, and therefore he certainly ſhall never be excluded. But if even ſuch are but ſcarcely ſaved, where ſhall they appear who

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are destitute of the love of God? There are few indeed but pretend to be lovers of God, but their love has not the inseparable properties of that sacred passion. Their pretence to it is an absurdity, and if put into language, would be such jargon as this, 'Lord, I love thee above all things, though I hardly ever affectionately think of thee; I love thee above all, though I am not careful to please thee; I love thee above all, though my conduct towards thee is quite the reverse of what it is towards one I love.' Will such an inconsistency as this pass for genuine supreme love to God, when it will not pass for common friendship among men? No, such have not the least spark of that heavenly fire in their breasts, for their carnal mind is enmity against God. And are these likely to be saved? likely to be admitted into the region of love, where there is not one cold or disloyal heart? likely to be happy in the presence and service of that God to whom they are disaffected? Alas! no. Where then shall they appear? O! in what forlorn, remote region of eternal exile from the blessed God!

I shall now conclude with a few reflections. 1. You may hence see the work of salvation is not that easy, trifling thing which many take it to be. They seem mighty cautious of laying out too much pains upon it; and they cannot bear that people should make such ado, and keep such a stir and noise about it. * For their part, they hope to go to heaven as well as the best of them, without all this preciseness: and upon these principles they act. They think they can never be too much in earnest, or too laborious in the pursuit of earthly things; but religion is a matter by the by with them; only the business of an hour once a week. But have these learned their religion from Christ the founder of it, or from his apostles, whom he appointed teachers of it? No, they have formed

* I here affect this low stile on purpose, to represent more exactly the sentiments of such careless sinners in their own usual language.

formed ſome eaſy ſyſtem from their own imaginations ſuited to their depraved taſte, indulgent to their ſloth and carnality, and favourable to their luſts; and this they call chriſtianity. But you have ſeen this is not the religion of the Bible: this is not the way to life laid out by God, but it is the ſmooth downward road to deſtruction. Therefore,

2. Examine yourſelves to which claſs you belong, whether to that of the righteous, who ſhall be ſaved, though with difficulty, or to that of the ungodly and the ſinner, who muſt appear in a very different ſituation. To determine this important inquiry, recollect the ſundry parts of the righteous man's character which I have briefly deſcribed, and ſee whether they belong to you. Do you carefully abſtain from vice and immorality? Do you make conſcience of every duty of religion? Have you ever been born again of God, and made more than externally religious? Are you ſenſible of the difficulties in your way from Satan, the world, and the fleſh? And do you exert yourſelves as in a field of battle or in a race? Do you work out your ſalvation with fear and trembling, and preſs into the kingdom of God? Are you true believers, penitents, and lovers of God? Are theſe or the contrary the conſtituents of your habitual character? I pray you make an impartial trial, for much depends upon it.

3. If this be your habitual character, be of good cheer for you ſhall be ſaved, though with difficulty. Be not diſcouraged when you fall into fiery trials, for they are no ſtrange things in the preſent ſtate. All that have walked in the ſame narrow road before you have met with them, but now they are ſafe arrived in their eternal home. Let your dependance be upon the aids of divine grace to bear you through, and you will overcome at laſt. But,

4. If your character be that of the ungodly and the ſinner, pauſe and think, where ſhall you appear at laſt? When, like our deceaſed friend, you leave this

mortal ſtate, and launch into regions unknown, where will you then appear? Muſt it not be in the region of ſin, which is your element now? in the ſociety of the devils, whom you reſemble in temper and imitate in conduct? among the trembling criminals at the left hand of the Judge, where the ungodly and ſinners ſhall all be crowded? If you continue ſuch as you now are, have you any reaſon at all to hope for a more favourable doom?

I ſhall conclude with a reflection to exemplify the context in another view, and that is, "If judgment begin at the houſe of God, what ſhall be the end of them that obey not the goſpel? If the righteous, the favourites of heaven, ſuffer ſo much in this world, what ſhall ſinners, with whom God is angry every day, and who are veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction, what ſhall they ſuffer in the eternal world, the proper place for rewards and puniſhments, and where an equitable Providence deals with every man according to his works? If the children are chaſtiſed with various calamities, and even die in common with the reſt of mankind, what ſhall be the doom of enemies and rebels? If thoſe meet with ſo many difficulties in the purſuit of ſalvation, what ſhall theſe ſuffer in enduring damnation? If the infernal powers are permitted to worry Chriſt's ſheep, how will they rend and tear the wicked as their proper prey? O that you may in *this your day know the things that belong to your peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes.* Luke xix. 42.

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

INDIFFERENCE TO LIFE URGED, FROM ITS SHORTNESS AND VANITY.*

1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. *But this I say, brethren, that the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

A Creature treading every moment upon the slippery brink of the grave, and ready every moment to shoot the gulph of eternity, and launch away to some unknown coast, ought to stand always in the posture of serious expectation; ought every day to be in his own mind taking leave of this world, breaking off the connections of his heart from it, and preparing for his last remove into that world in which he must reside, not for a few months or years as in this, but through a boundless everlasting duration. Such a situation requires habitual constant thoughtfulness, abstraction from the world, and serious preparation for death and eternity. But when we are called, as we frequently are, to perform the last sad offices to our friends and neighbours who have taken their flight a little before us; when the solemn pomp and horrors of death strike our senses, then certainly it becomes us to be unusually thoughtful and serious. Dying beds, the last struggles and groans of dissolving nature, pale, cold, ghastly corpses,

"The

* This sermon is dated, at Mr. Thompson's Funeral, February 16, 1759.

" The knell, the ſhroud, the mattock, and the grave ;
" The deep damp vault, the darkneſs, and the worm ;"

theſe are very alarming monitors of our own mortality : theſe outpreach the loudeſt preacher ; and they muſt be deaf and ſenſeleſs rocks, and not men, who do not hear and feel their voice. Among the numberleſs inſtances of the divine ſkill in bringing good out of evil this is one, that paſt generations have ſickened and died to warn their ſucceſſors. One here and there alſo is ſingled out of our neighbourhood or families, and made an example, a *memento mori*, to us that ſurvive, to rouſe us out of our ſtupid ſleep, to give us the ſignal of the approach of the laſt enemy, Death, to conſtrain us to let go our eager graſp of this vain world, and ſet us upon looking out and preparing for another. And may I hope my hearers are come here to-day determined to make this improvement of this melancholy occaſion, and to gain this great advantage from our loſs ? To this I call you as with a voice from the grave ; and therefore *he that hath ears let him hear.*

One great reaſon of mens exceſſive attachment to the preſent ſtate, and their ſtupid neglect to the concerns of eternity, is their forming too high an eſtimate of the affairs of time in compariſon with thoſe of eternity. While the important realities of the eternal world are out of view, unthought of, and diſregarded, as, alas ! they generally are by the moſt of mankind, what mighty things in their eſteem are the relations, the joys and ſorrows, the poſſeſſions and bereavements, the acquiſitions and purſuits of this life? What airs of importance do they put on in their view ? How do they engroſs their anxious thoughts and cares, and exhauſt their ſtrength and ſpirits ? To be happy, to be rich, to be great and honourable, to enjoy your fill of pleaſure in this world, is not this a great matter, the main intereſt with many of you ? is not this the object of your ambition, your eager deſire and laborious purſuit ? But to conſume away your

your life in ſickneſs and pain, in poverty and diſgrace, in abortive ſchemes and diſappointed purſuits, what a ſerious calamity, what an huge affliction is this in your eſteem? What is there in the compaſs of the univerſe that you are ſo much afraid of, and ſo cautiouſly ſhunning? Whether large profits or loſſes in trade be not a mighty matter, aſk the buſy, anxious merchant. Whether poverty be not a moſt miſerable ſtate, aſk the poor that feel it, and the rich that fear it. Whether riches be not a very important happineſs, aſk the poſſeſſors; or rather aſk the reſtleſs purſuers of them, who expect ſtill greater happineſs from them than thoſe that are taught by experience can flatter themſelves with. Whether the pleaſures of the conjugal ſtate are not great and delicate, conſult the few happy pairs here and there who enjoy them. Whether the loſs of an affectionate huſband and a tender father be not a moſt afflictive bereavement, a torturing ſeparation of heart from heart, or rather a tearing of one's heart in pieces, aſk the mourning, weeping widow, and fatherleſs children, when hovering round his dying bed, or conducting his dear remains to the cold grave. In ſhort, it is evident from a thouſand inſtances, that the enjoyments, purſuits, and ſorrows of this life are mighty matters! nay, are all in all in the eſteem of the generality of mankind. Theſe are the things they moſt deeply feel, the things about which they are chiefly concerned, and which are the objects of their ſtrongeſt paſſions.

But is this a juſt eſtimate of things? Are the affairs of this world then indeed ſo intereſting and all important? Yes, if eternity be a dream, and heaven and hell but majeſtic chimeras or fairy lands; if we were always to live in this world, and had no concern with any thing beyond it; if the joys of earth were the higheſt we could hope for, or its miſeries the moſt terrible we could fear, then indeed we might take this world for our all, and regard its affairs as the moſt

moſt important that our nature is capable of. *But this I ſay, brethren* (and I pronounce it as the echo of an inſpired apoſtle's voice) this I ſay, *the time is ſhort;* the time of life in which we have any thing to do with theſe affairs is a ſhort contracted ſpan. Therefore *it remaineth*, that is, this is the inference we ſhould draw from the ſhortneſs of time, *that they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it, or uſing it to exceſs; for the faſhion of this world*, theſe tender relations, this weeping and rejoicing, this buying, poſſeſſing, and uſing this world, *paſſeth away*. The phantom will ſoon vaniſh, the ſhadow will ſoon fly off: and they that have wives or huſbands in this tranſitory life, will in reality be as though they had none; and they that weep now, as though they wept not; and they that now rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that now buy, poſſeſs and uſe this world, as though they never had the leaſt property in it. This is the ſolemn mortifying doctrine I am now to inculcate upon you in the further illuſtration of the ſeveral parts of my text; a doctrine juſtly alarming to the lovers of this world, and the neglecters of that life which is to come.

When St. Paul pronounces any thing with an unuſual air of ſolemnity and authority; and after the formality of an introduction to gain attention, it muſt be a matter of uncommon weight, and worthy of the moſt ſerious regard. In this manner he introduces the funeral ſentiments in my text. *This I ſay, brethren;* this I ſolemnly pronounce as the mouth of God: this I declare as a great truth but little regarded; and which therefore there is much need I ſhould repeatedly declare: this I ſay with all the authority of an apoſtle, a meſſenger from heaven; and I demand your ſerious attention to what I am going to ſay.

And

And what is it he is introducing with all this ſolemn formality? Why, it is an old, plain, familiar truth univerſally known and confeſſed, namely, That the time of our continuance in this world is ſhort. But why ſo much formality in introducing ſuch a common plain truth as this? Becauſe, however generally it be known and confeſſed, it is very rarely regarded; and it requires more than even the moſt ſolemn addreſs of an apoſtle to turn the attention of a thoughtleſs world to it. How many of you, my brethren, are convinced againſt your wills of this melancholy truth, and yet turn every way to avoid the mortifying thought, are always uneaſy when it forces itſelf upon your minds, and do not ſuffer it to have a proper influence upon your temper and practice, but live as if you believed the time of life were long, and even everlaſting? O! when will the happy hour come when you will think and act like thoſe that believe that common uncontroverted truth, that the time of life is ſhort? Then you would no longer think of delays, nor contrive artifices to put off the work of your ſalvation; then you could not bear the thought of ſuch negligent, or languid, feeble endeavours in a work that muſt be done, and that in ſo ſhort a time.

This, I ſay, my *brethren, the time is ſhort;* the time of life is abſolutely ſhort; a ſpan, an inch, a hair's breadth. How near the neighbourhood between the cradle and the grave! How ſhort the journey from infancy to old age, through all the intermediate ſtages! Let the few among you who bear the marks of old age upon you in grey hairs, wrinkles, weakneſs, and pains, look back upon your tireſome pilgrimage through life, and does it not appear to you, as though you commenced men but yeſterday? And how little a way can you trace it back till you are loſt in the forgotten unconſcious days of infancy, or in that eternal non-exiſtence in which you lay before your creation! But they are but a very few that drag on their

their lives through ſeventy or eighty years. Old men can hardly find cotemporaries: a new race has ſtarted up, and they are become almoſt ſtrangers in their own neighbourhoods. By the beſt calculations that have been made, at leaſt one half of mankind die under ſeven years old. They are little particles of life, ſparks of being juſt kindled and then quenched, or rather diſmiſſed from their ſuffocating confinement in clay, that they may aſpire, blaze out, and mingle with their kindred flames in the eternal world, the proper region, the native element of ſpirits.

And how ſtrongly does the ſhortneſs of this life prove the certainty of another? Would it be worth while, would it be conſiſtent with the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Deity, to ſend ſo many infant millions of reaſonable creatures into this world, to live the low life of a vegetable or an animal for a few moments, or days, or years, if there were no other world for theſe young immortals to remove to, in which their powers might open, enlarge, and ripen? Certainly men are not ſuch inſects of a day: certainly this is not the laſt ſtage of human nature: certainly there is an eternity; there is a heaven and a hell:—otherwiſe we might expoſtulate with our Maker, as David once did upon that ſuppoſition; *Wherefore haſt thou made all men in vain?* Pſalm lxxxix. 47.

In that awful eternity we muſt all be in a ſhort time. Yes, my brethren, I may venture to prophecy that, in leſs than ſeventy or eighty years, the moſt, if not all this aſſembly, muſt be in ſome apartment of that ſtrange untried world. The merry, unthinking, irreligious multitude in that doleful manſion which I muſt mention, grating as the ſound is to their ears, and that is hell! * and the pious, penitent,

* Regions of ſorrow! doleful ſhades! where Peace
And Reſt can never dwell! Hope never comes,
That comes to all: but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed
With ever-burning ſulphur unconſum'd. MILTON.

tent, believing few in the bliſsful ſeats of heaven. There we ſhall reſide a long, long time indeed; or rather through a long, endleſs eternity. Which leads me to add,

That as the time of life is ſhort abſolutely in itſelf, ſo eſpecially it is ſhort comparatively; that is, in compariſon with eternity. In this compariſon, even the long life of Methuſelah and the antediluvians ſhrink into a mere point, a nothing. Indeed no duration of time, however long, will bear the compariſon. Millions of millions of years; as many years as the ſands upon the ſea ſhore; as many years as the particles of duſt in this huge globe of earth; as many years as the particles of matter in the vaſter heavenly bodies that roll above us, and even in the whole material univerſe, all theſe years do not bear ſo much proportion to eternity as a moment, a pulſe, or the twinkling of an eye, to ten thouſand ages! not ſo much as a hair's breadth to the diſtance from the ſpot where we ſtand to the fartheſt ſtar, or the remoteſt corner of the creation. In ſhort, they do not bear the leaſt imaginable proportion at all; for all this length of years, though beyond the power of diſtinct enumeration to us, will as certainly come to an end as an hour or a moment; and when it comes to an end, it is entirely and irrecoverably paſt: but eternity (O the ſolemn tremendous ſound!) eternity will never, never, never come to an end! eternity will never, never, never be paſt!

And is this eternity, this awful all-important eternity, entailed upon us! upon us the offſpring of the duſt! the creatures of yeſterday! upon us who a little while ago were leſs than a gnat, leſs than a mote, were nothing! upon us who are every moment liable to the arreſt of death, ſinking into the grave, and mouldering into duſt one after another in a thick ſucceſſion! upon us whoſe thoughts, and cares, and purſuits, are ſo confined to time and earth, as if we had nothing to do with any thing beyond! O! is

this immenſe inheritance unalienably ours! Yes, brethren, it is; reaſon and revelation prove our title beyond all diſpute. It is an inheritance entailed upon us, whether we will or not; whether we have made it our intereſt it ſhould be ours or not. To command ourſelves into nothing is as much above our power as to bring ourſelves into being. Sin may make our ſouls miſerable, but it cannot make them mortal. Sin may forfeit an happy eternity, and render our immortality a curſe; ſo that it would be better for us if we never had been born: but ſin cannot put an end to our being, as it can to our happineſs, nor procure for us the ſhocking relief of reſt in the hideous gulph of annihilation.

And is a little time, a few months or years, a great matter to us? to us who are heirs of an eternal duration? How inſignificant is a moment in ſeventy or eighty years! but how much more inſignificant is even the longeſt life upon earth, when compared with eternity! How trifling are all the concerns of time to thoſe of immortality! What is it to us who are to live for ever, whether we live happy or miſerable for an hour? whether we have wives, or whether we have none; whether we rejoice, or whether we weep; whether we buy, poſſeſs, and uſe this world, or whether we conſume away our life in hunger, and nakedneſs, and the want of all things, it will be all one in a little, little time. Eternity will level all; and eternity is at the door.

And how ſhall we ſpend this eternal duration that is thus entailed upon us? Shall we ſleep it away in a ſtupid inſenſibility or in a ſtate of indifferency, neither happy nor miſerable? No, no, my brethren; we muſt ſpend it in the height of happineſs or in the depth of miſery. The happineſs and miſery of the world to come will not conſiſt in ſuch childiſh toys as thoſe that give us pleaſure and pain in this infant ſtate of our exiſtence, but in the moſt ſubſtantial realities ſuitable to an immortal ſpirit, capable of vaſt improve-

improvements, and arrived at its adult age. Now, as the apoſtle illuſtrates it, we are children, and we ſpeak like children, we underſtand like children; but then we ſhall become men, and put away childiſh things. 1 Cor. xiii. 11. Then we ſhall be beyond receiving pleaſure or pain from ſuch trifles as excite them in this puerile ſtate. This is not the place of rewards or puniſhments, and therefore the great Ruler of the world does not exert his perfections in the diſtribution of either; but eternity is allotted for that very purpoſe, and therefore he will then diſtribute rewards and puniſhments worthy himſelf, ſuch as will proclaim him God in acts of grace and vengeance, as he has appeared in all his other works. Then he will *ſhew his wrath*, and *make* his power *known on the veſſels of wrath who have made themſelves fit for deſtruction*, and nothing elſe; *and he will ſhew the riches of the glory of his grace upon the veſſels of mercy, whom he prepared beforehand for glory.* Rom. ix. 22, 23. Thus heaven and hell will proclaim the God, will ſhew him to be the Author of their reſpective joys and pains, by their agreeable or terrible magnificence and grandeur. O eternity! with what majeſtic wonders art thou repleniſhed, where Jehovah acts with his own immediate hand, and diſplays himſelf God-like and unrivalled, in his exploits both of vengeance and of grace! In this preſent ſtate, our good and evil are blended; our happineſs has ſome bitter ingredients, and our miſeries have ſome agreeable mitigations: but in the eternal world good and evil ſhall be entirely and for ever ſeparated; all will be pure, unmingled happineſs, or pure, unmingled miſery. In the preſent ſtate the beſt have not uninterrupted peace within; conſcience has frequent cauſe to make them uneaſy: ſome mote or other falls into its tender eye, and ſets it a weeping: and the worſt alſo have their arts to keep conſcience ſometimes eaſy, and ſilence its clamours. But then conſcience will have its full ſcope. It will never more paſs a cenſure upon

upon the righteous, and it will never more be a friend, or even an inactive enemy to the wicked for so much as one moment. And O what a perennial fountain of bliss or pain will conscience then be! Society contributes much to our happiness or misery. But what misery can be felt or feared in the immediate presence and fellowship of the blessed God and Jesus (the friend of man;) of angels and saints, and all the glorious natives of heaven? But, on the other hand, what happiness can be enjoyed or hoped for, what misery can be escaped in the horrid society of lost, abandoned ghosts of the angelic and human nature; dreadfully mighty and malignant, and rejoicing only in each other's misery; mutual enemies, and mutual tormentors bound together inseparably in everlasting chains of darkness! O the horror of the thought! In short, even an heathen * could say,

> "Had I an hundred tongues, an hundred mouths,
> An iron voice, I could not comprehend
> The various forms and punishments of vice."

The most terrible images which even the pencil of divine inspiration can draw, such as *a lake of fire and brimstone*, *utter darkness*, *the blackness of darkness*, *a never-dying worm*, *unquenchable*, *everlasting fire*, and all the most dreadful figures that can be drawn from all parts of the universe, are not sufficient to represent the punishments of the eternal world. And, on the other hand, *the eye*, which has ranged through so many objects, *has not seen; the ear*, which has had still more extensive intelligence, *has not heard; nor has the heart*, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, *conceived the things that God hath laid up for them that love him.* The enjoyments of time fall as much short of those of eternity as time itself falls short of eternity itself.

But

* Non, mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,
Ferrea vox, omnes scelerum comprendere formas,
Omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina possum.
VIRG. Æn. VI. l. 625.

But what gives infinite importance to theſe joys and ſorrows is, that as they are enjoyed or ſuffered in the eternal world, they are themſelves eternal. Eternal joys! eternal pains! joys and pains that will laſt as long as the King eternal and immortal will live to diſtribute them! as long as our immortal ſpirits will live to feel them! O what joys and pains are theſe!

And theſe my brethren, are awaiting every one of us. Theſe pleaſures, or theſe pains, are felt this moment by ſuch of our friends and acquaintance as have ſhot the gulph before us; and in a little, little while, you and I muſt feel them.

And what then have we to do with time and earth? Are the pleaſures and pains of this world worthy to be compared with theſe? *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;* the enjoyments and ſufferings, the labours and purſuits, the laughter and tears of the preſent ſtate, are all nothing in this compariſon. What is the loſs of an eſtate or of a dear relative to the loſs of an happy immortality? But if our heavenly inheritance be ſecure, what though we ſhould be reduced into Job's forlorn ſituation, we have enough left more than to fill up all deficiencies. What though we are poor, ſickly, melancholy, racked with pains, and involved in every human miſery, heaven will more than make amends for all. But if we have no evidences of our title to that, the ſenſe of theſe tranſitory diſtreſſes may be ſwallowed up in the juſt fear of the miſeries of eternity. Alas! what avails it that we play away a few years in mirth and gaiety, in grandeur and pleaſure, if when theſe few years are fled, we lift up our eyes in hell, tormented in flames! O what are all theſe things to a candidate for eternity! an heir of everlaſting happineſs, or everlaſting miſery!

It is from ſuch convictive premiſes as theſe that St. Paul draws his inference in my text; *It remaineth therefore that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they*

they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it.

The firſt branch of the inference refers to the dear and tender relations that we ſuſtain in this life. *It remaineth that thoſe that have wives*, and by a parity of reaſon, thoſe that have huſbands, parents, children, or friends dear as their own ſouls, *be as though they had none.* St. Paul is far from recommending a ſtoical neglect of theſe dear relations. That he tenderly felt the ſenſations, and warmly recommended the mutual duties of ſuch relations, appears in the ſtrongeſt light in other parts of his writings, where he is addreſſing himſelf to huſbands and wives, parents and children. But his deſign here is to repreſent the inſignificancy even of theſe dear relations, conſidering how ſhort and vaniſhing they are, and comparing them with the infinite concerns of eternity. Theſe dear creatures we ſhall be able to call our own for ſo ſhort a time, that it is hardly worth while to eſteem them ours now. The concerns of eternity are of ſo much greater moment, that it is very little matter whether we enjoy theſe comforts or not. In a few years at moſt, it will be all one. The dear ties that now unite the hearts of huſband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend, will be broken for ever. In that world where we muſt all be in a little, little time, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are in this reſpect like the angels. And of how ſmall conſequence is it to creatures that are to exiſt for ever in the moſt perfect happineſs or miſery, and that muſt ſo ſoon break off all their tender connections with the dear creatures that were united to their hearts in the preſent tranſitory ſtate! of how ſmall conſequence is it to ſuch, whether they ſpend a few years of their exiſtence in all the delights of the conjugal ſtate and the ſocial life, or are forlorn, bereaved, deſtitute, widowed, childleſs, fatherleſs, friendleſs! The grave and eternity will level all theſe

little

little inequalities. The duſt of Job has no more ſenſe of his paſt calamities than that of Solomon who felt ſo few; and their immortal parts are equally happy in heaven, if they were equally holy upon earth. And of how ſmall conſequence is it to Judas now, after he has been above ſeventeen hundred years in his own place, whether he died ſingle or married, a parent or childleſs! This makes no diſtinction in heaven or hell, unleſs that, as relations increaſe, the duties belonging to them are multiplied, and the truſt becomes the heavier; the diſcharge of which meets with a more glorious reward in heaven, and the neglect of which ſuffers a ſeverer puniſhment in hell.

Farther, the apoſtle, in ſaying that *they who have wives ſhould be as though they had none*, intends that we ſhould not exceſſively ſet our hearts upon any of our deareſt relatives ſo as to tempt us to neglect the ſuperior concerns of the world to come, or draw off our affections from God. We ſhould always remember who it was that ſaid, *He that loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children, more than me, is not worthy of me. He that is married*, ſays St. Paul in the context, *careth for the things of the world, how he may pleaſe his wife*. verſe 33. But we ſhould beware leſt this care ſhould run to exceſs, and render us careleſs of the intereſts of our ſouls, and the concerns of immortality. To moderate exceſſive care and anxiety about the things of this world is the deſign the apoſtle has immediately in view in my text; for having taught *thoſe that have wives to be as though they had none*, &c. he immediately adds, *I would have you without carefulneſs;* and this is the reaſon why I would have you form ſuch an eſtimate of all the conditions of life, and count them as on a level. Thoſe that have the agreeable weights of theſe relations ought no more to abandon themſelves to the over-eager purſuit of this world, or place their happineſs in it; ought no more to neglect the concerns of religion and eternity than if they did not bear theſe relations. The buſy head

of

of a numerous family is as much concerned to secure his everlasting interest as a single man. Whatever becomes of him and his in this vanishing world, he must by no means neglect to provide for his subsistence in the eternal world; and nothing in this world can at all excuse that neglect.

O that these thoughts may deeply affect the hearts of such of us as are agreeably connected in such relations! and may they inspire us with a proper insensibility and indifference towards them when compared with the affairs of religion and eternity! May this consideration moderate the sorrows of the mourners on this melancholy occasion, and teach them to esteem the gain or loss of an happy eternity as that which should swallow up every other concern!

The next branch of the inference refers to the sorrows of life. *It remaineth that they that weep be as if they wept not.* Whatever afflictions may befal us here, they will not last long, but will soon be swallowed up in the greater joys or sorrows of the eternal world. These tears will not always flow; these sighs will not always heave our breasts. We can sigh no longer than the vital breath inspires our lungs; and we can weep no longer than till death stops all the fountains of our tears; and that will be in a very little time. And when we enter into the eternal world, if we have been the dutiful children of God here, his own gentle hand shall wipe away every tear from our faces, and he will comfort the mourners. Then all the sorrows of life will cease for ever, and no more painful remembrance of them will remain than of the pains and sickness of our unconscious infancy. But if all the discipline of our heavenly Father fails to reduce us to our duty, if we still continue rebellious and incorrigible under his rod, and consequently the miseries of this life convey us to those of the future, the smaller will be swallowed up and lost in the greater as a drop in the ocean. Some desperate sinners have hardened themselves in sin with this cold comfort, 'That since they

they muſt be miſerable hereafter, they will at leaſt take their fill of pleaſures here, and take a merry journey to hell.' But, alas! what a ſorry mitigation will this be! how entirely will all this career of pleaſure be forgotten at the firſt pang of infernal anguiſh! O! what poor relief to a ſoul loſt for ever, to reflect that this eternity of pain followed upon and was procured by a few months or years of ſordid guilty pleaſure! Was that a relief or an aggravation which Abraham mentions to his loſt ſon, when he puts him in mind, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things.* Luke xvi. 25. Thou hadſt then all the ſhare of good which thou ever ſhalt enjoy; thou hadſt thy portion in that world where thou didſt chooſe to have it, and therefore ſtand to the conſequences of thine own choice, and look for no other portion. O! who can bear to be thus reminded and upbraided in the midſt of remedileſs miſery!

Upon the whole, whatever afflictions or bereavements we ſuffer in this world, let us moderate our ſorrows and keep them within bounds. Let them not work up and ferment into murmurings and inſurrections againſt God, who gives and takes away, and bleſſed be his name! Let them not ſink us into a ſullen diſlike of the mercies ſtill left in our poſſeſſion. How unreaſonable and ungrateful, that God's retaking one of his mercies ſhould tempt us to deſpiſe all the reſt! Take a view of the rich inventory of bleſſings ſtill remaining, and you will find them much more numerous and important than thoſe you have loſt. Do not miſtake me, as if I recommended or expected an utter inſenſibility under the calamities of life. I allow nature its moderate tears; but let them not riſe to floods of inconſolable ſorrows; I allow you to feel your afflictions like men and chriſtians, but then you muſt bear them like men and chriſtians too. May God grant that we may all exemplify this direction when we are put to the trial!

The third branch of the inference refers to the joys and pleaſures of life. *The time is ſhort, it remaineth therefore that they that rejoice be as if they rejoiced not;* that is, the joys of this life, from whatever earthly cauſe they ſpring, are ſo ſhort and tranſitory, that they are as of no account to a creature that is to exiſt for ever; to exiſt for ever in joys or pains of an infinitely higher and more important kind. To ſuch a creature it is an indifferency whether he laughs or weeps, whether he be joyful or ſad, for only a few fleeting moments. Theſe vaniſhing, uncertain joys, ſhould not engroſs our hearts as our chief happineſs, nor cauſe us to neglect and forfeit the divine and everlaſting joys above the ſkies. The pleaſure we receive from any created enjoyment ſhould not enſnare us to make it our idol, to forget that we muſt part with it, or to fret and murmur, and repine when the parting hour comes. When we are rejoicing in the abundance of earthly bleſſings, we ſhould be as careful and laborious in ſecuring the favour of God and everlaſting happineſs as if we rejoiced not. If our eternal All is ſecure it is enough; and it will not at all be heightened or diminiſhed by the reflection that we lived a joyful or a ſad life in this pilgrimage. But if we ſpend our immortality in miſery, what ſorry comfort will it be that we laughed, and played, and frolicked away a few years upon earth? years that were given us for a ſerious purpoſe, as a ſpace for repentance, and preparation for eternity. Therefore let "thoſe that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not;" that is, be nobly indifferent to all the little amuſements and pleaſures of ſo ſhort a life.

And let *thoſe that buy be as if they poſſeſſed not.*—This is the fourth particular in the inference from the ſhortneſs of time, and it refers to the trade and buſineſs of life. It refers not only to the buſy merchant, whoſe life is a viciſſitude of buying and ſelling, but alſo to the planter, the tradeſman, and indeed to every man among us; for we are all carrying on a commerce,

merce, more or leſs, for the purpoſes of this life.—You all buy, and ſell, and exchange, in ſome form or other; and the things of this world are perpetually paſſing from hand to hand. Sometimes you have good bargains, and make large acquiſitions. But ſet not your hearts upon them; but in the midſt of all your poſſeſſions, live as if you poſſeſſed them not. Alas! of what ſmall account are all the things you call your own upon earth, to you who are to ſtay here ſo ſhort a time; to you who muſt ſo ſoon bid an eternal farewell to them all, and go as naked out of the world as you came into it; to you who muſt ſpend an everlaſting duration far beyond the reach of all theſe enjoyments? It is not worth your while to call them your own, ſince you muſt ſo ſoon reſign them to other hands. The melancholy occaſion of this day may convince you that ſucceſs in trade, and a plentiful eſtate, procured and kept by induſty and good management, is neither a ſecurity againſt death nor a comfort in it. Alas! what ſervice can theſe houſes, and lands, and numerous domeſtics perform to the old clay that moulders in yonder grave, or to the immortal ſpirit that is fled we know not where! Therefore buy, ſenſible that you can buy nothing upon a ſure and laſting title; nothing that you can certainly call yours to-morrow. Buy, but do not ſell your hearts to the trifles you buy, and let them not tempt you to act as if this were your final home, or to neglect to lay up for yourſelves treaſures in heaven; treaſures which you can call your own when this world is laid in aſhes, and which you can enjoy and live upon in what I may call an angelic ſtate, when theſe bodies have nothing but a coffin, a ſhroud, and a few feet of earth.

Finally, let "thoſe that uſe this world, uſe it as not abuſing it." This is the fifth branch of the inference from the ſhortneſs of time; and it ſeems to have a particular reference to ſuch as have had ſuch ſucceſs in their purſuit of the world, that they have now retired

tired from buſineſs, and appear to themſelves to have nothing to do but enjoy the world, for which they ſo long toiled. Or it may refer to thoſe who are born heirs to plentiful eſtates, and therefore are not concerned to acquire the world, but to uſe and enjoy it. To ſuch I ſay, "Uſe this world as not abuſing it;" that is, uſe it, enjoy it, take moderate pleaſure in it, but do not abuſe it by proſtituting it to ſinful purpoſes, making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof, indulging yourſelves in debauchery and extravagance, placing your confidence in it, and ſinging a *requiem* to your ſouls. "Soul, take thine eaſe; eat, drink, and be merry; for thou haſt much goods laid up in ſtore for many years." O! preſumptuous "fool, this night thy ſoul may be required of thee." Luke xii. 19, 20. Do not uſe this world to exceſs * (ſo the word may be tranſlated) by placing your hearts exceſſively upon it as your favourite portion and principal happineſs, and by ſuffering it to draw off your thoughts and affections from the ſuperior bleſſedneſs of the world to come. Uſe the world, but let it not tempt you to exceſs in eating, drinking, dreſs, equipage, or in any article of the parade of riches. Religion by no means enjoins a ſordid, niggardly, churliſh manner of living; it allows you to enjoy the bleſſings of life, but then it forbids all exceſs, and requires you to keep within the bounds of moderation in your enjoyments. Thus *uſe this world as not abuſing it.*

The apoſtle's inference is not only drawn from ſtrong premiſes, but alſo enforced with a very weighty reaſon; *for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away.* The whole ſcheme and ſyſtem of worldly affairs, all this marrying, and rejoicing, and weeping, and buying, and enjoying *paſſeth away*, paſſeth away this moment; it not only will paſs away, but it is even now paſſing away. The ſtream of time, with all the trifles that float on it, and all the eager purſuers of theſe bubbles,

* *katachromenoi.* So it is rendered by Doddridge, and others.

bubbles, is in motion, in ſwift inceſſant motion, to empty itſelf and all that fall upon it, into the ſhoreleſs ocean of eternity, where all will be abſorbed and loſt for ever. And ſhall we exceſſively doat upon things that are perpetually flying from us, and in a little time will be no more our property than the riches of the world before the flood? *O ye ſons of men, how long will you follow after vanity? why do you ſpend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth not?*

Some critics apprehend this ſentence, *the faſhion of this world paſſeth away*, contains a fine ſtriking alluſion to the ſtage, and that it might be rendered, "the ſcene of this world paſſeth away." 'You know,' ſays a fine writer * upon this text, 'that upon the ſtage the actors aſſume imaginary characters, and appear in borrowed forms. One mimics the courage and triumphs of the hero; another appears with a crown and a ſceptre, and ſtruts about with all the ſolemnity and majeſty of a prince; a third puts on the fawning ſmile of a courtier, or the haughtineſs of a ſucceſsful favourite; and the fourth is repreſented in the dreſs of a ſcholar or a divine. An hour or two they act their ſeveral parts on the ſtage, and amuſe the ſpectators; but the ſcenes are conſtantly ſhifting: and when the play is concluded, the feigned characters are laid aſide, and the imaginary kings and emperors are immediately diveſted of their pretended authority and enſigns of royalty, and appear in their native meanneſs.

'Juſt ſo this world is a great ſtage that preſents as variable ſcenes, and as fantaſtical characters; princes, politicians, and warriors, the rich, the learned, and the wiſe: and, on the other hand, the poor weak and deſpiſed part of mankind poſſeſs their ſeveral places on the theatre; ſome lurk obſcurely in a corner, ſeldom come from behind the ſcenes, or creep along unnoticed; others make a ſplendid ſhow and a loud noiſe,

* Dunlop's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 212, 213, 214.

noiſe, are adorned with the honours of a crown, or poſſeſſed of large eſtates and great powers; fill the world with the glory of their names and actions; conquer in the field, or are laborioufly employed in the cabinet. Well, in a little time the ſcene is ſhifted, and all theſe vain phantoms diſappear. The king of terrors clears the ſtage of the buſy actors, ſtrips them of all their fictitious ornaments, and ends the vain farce of life: and, being brought all upon a level, they go down to the grave in their original nakedneſs, are jumbled together undiſtinguiſhed, and paſs away as a tale that is told.

Farther: 'Upon the Greek or Roman theatres, to which the apoſtle alludes, the actors, if I miſtake not, frequently, if not always, came upon the ſtage in a diſguiſe, with a falſe face, which was adapted to the different perſon or character they deſigned to aſſume; ſo that no man was to be ſeen with his real face, but all put on borrowed viſages. And in alluſion to this, the text might be rendered, "The maſquerade of the world paſſeth away," pointing out the fraud and diſguiſes which mankind put on, and the flattering forms in which they generally appear, which will all paſs away when the grave ſhall pull off the maſk; and they go down to the other world naked and open,' and appear at the ſupreme tribunal in their due characters, 'and can no more be varniſhed over with fraudulent colouring.' *

Others apprehend, the apoſtle here alludes to ſome grand proceſſion, in which pageants or emblematical figures paſs along the crowded ſtreets. The ſtaring crowd wait their appearance with eager eyes, and place themſelves in the moſt convenient poſture of obſervation; they gape at the paſſing ſhow; they follow it with a wondering gaze;—and now it is paſt; and now it begins to look dim to the ſight; and now it diſappears. Juſt ſuch is this tranſitory world. Thus it begins to attract the eager gaze of mankind;

* Dunlop's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 215.

mankind; thus it marches by in ſwift proceſſion from our eyes to meet the eyes of others; and thus it ſoon vaniſhes and diſappears. *

And ſhall we always be ſtupidly ſtaring upon this empty parade, and forget that world of ſubſtantial realities to which we are haſtening? No; let us live and act as the expectants of that world, and as having nothing to do with this world, but only as a ſchool, a ſtate of diſcipline, to educate and prepare us for another.

O! that I could ſucceſsfully impreſs this exhortation upon all your hearts! O! that I could prevail upon you all this day to break off your over-fond attachment to earth, and to make ready for immortality! Could I carry this point, it would be a greater advantage than all the dead could receive by any funeral panegyrics from me. I ſpeak for the advantage of the living upon ſuch occaſions, and not to celebrate the virtues of thoſe who have paſſed the trial, and received their ſentence from the Supreme Judge. And I am well ſatisfied the mourning relatives of our deceaſed friend, who beſt knew and eſteemed his worth, would be rather offended than pleaſed, if I ſhould proſtitute the preſent hour to ſo mean a purpoſe. Indeed, many a character leſs worthy of praiſe, often makes a ſhining figure in funeral ſermons. Many that have not been ſuch tender huſbands, ſuch affectionate fathers, ſuch kind maſters, ſuch ſincere upright friends, ſo honeſt and punctual in trade, ſuch zealous lovers of religion and good men,

* Thus Dr. Doddridge underſtands the text, FAMILY EXPOSITOR, in loc. and thus he beautifully deſcribes it in his Hymns:

'The empty pageant rolls along;
'The giddy unexperienc'd throng
'Purſue it with enchanted eyes;
'It paſſeth in ſwift march away,
'Still more and more its charms decay,
'Till the laſt gaudy colours dies. See HYMN 268.

Lucian has the beſt illuſtration of this paſſage, in this view, that I have ſeen. Dialogue XXXII. Murphy's Edit.

men, have had their putrifying remains perfumed with public praiſe from a place ſo ſolemn as the pulpit; but you can witneſs for me, it is not my uſual foible to run to this extreme. My buſineſs is with you, who are as yet alive, to hear me. To you I call, as with the voice of your deceaſed friend and neighbour,—Prepare! prepare for eternity! O! if the ſpirits that you once knew, while clothed in fleſh, ſhould take my place, would not this be their united voice, 'Prepare! prepare for eternity! ye frail ſhort-lived mortals! ye near neighbours to the world of ſpirits! ye borderers upon heaven or hell; make ready, looſen your hearts from earth, and all that it contains: weigh anchor, and prepare to launch away into the boundleſs ocean of eternity, which methinks is now within your ken, and roars within hearing.' And remember, 'this I ſay, brethren,' with great confidence, *the time is ſhort: it remaineth therefore*, for the future,—*that they that have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as if they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it: for the faſhion of this world*, all its ſcheme of affairs, all the vain parade, all the idle farce of life, *paſſeth away*. And away let it paſs, if we may at laſt obtain a better country; that is, an heavenly: which may God grant for Jeſus' ſake! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXIV.

THE PREACHING OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED THE MEAN OF SALVATION.

1 Cor. i. 22—24. *For the Jews require a ſign, and the Greeks ſeek after wiſdom; but we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.*

IF we ſhould conſider Chriſtianity only as an improvement of natural religion, containing a complete ſyſtem of morality, and preſcribing a pure plan of worſhip, it is a matter of the utmoſt importance, and worthy of univerſal acceptance. In the one view, it is neceſſary to inform the world in matters of ſin and duty, and reform their vicious practices; and in the other, to put an end to that fooliſh and barbarous ſuperſtition which had over-run the earth, under the notion of religious worſhip. And theſe ends the Chriſtian religion fully anſwers. Never was there ſuch a finiſhed ſyſtem of morality, or ſuch a ſpiritual and divine model of worſhip invented or revealed, as by the deſpiſed Galilean, and the twelve fiſhermen that received their inſtructions from him.

But this is not the principal excellency of the goſpel! and did it carry its diſcoveries no farther, alas! it would be far from revealing a ſuitable religion for ſinners. A religion for ſinners muſt reveal a method of ſalvation for the loſt; of pardon for the guilty, and of ſanctifying grace for the weak and wicked. And, bleſſed be God, the goſpel anſwers this end; and it is its peculiar excellency that it does ſo. It is

its peculiar excellency that it publiſhes a crucified Chriſt as an all-ſufficient Saviour to a guilty, periſhing world. It is its glorious peculiarity that it reveals a method of ſalvation every way honourable to God and his government, and every way ſuitable to our neceſſities; and that is, by the ſufferings of Chriſt, the Founder of this religion. This is the ground, the ſubſtance, and marrow of the goſpel; and it is this, above all other things, that its miniſters ought to preach and inculcate. It ſhould have the ſame place in their ſermons which it has in that goſpel which it is their buſineſs to preach; that is, it ſhould be the foundation, the ſubſtance, the center, and drift of all.

This was the practice of the moſt ſucceſsful preacher of the goſpel that ever bore that commiſſion: I mean St. Paul. And in this he was not ſingular; his fellow-apoſtles heartily concurred with him, *We preach Chriſt crucified.* The ſufferings of Chriſt, which had a dreadful conſummation in his crucifixion, their neceſſity, deſign, and conſequences, and the way of ſalvation thereby opened for a guilty world, theſe are the principal materials of our preaching; to inſtruct mankind in theſe is the great object of our miniſtry, and the unwearied labour of our lives. We might eaſily chooſe ſubjects more pleaſing and popular, more fit to diſplay our learning and abilities, and ſet off the ſtrong reaſoner, or the fine orator: but our commiſſion, as miniſters of a crucified Jeſus, binds us to the ſubject; and the neceſſity of the world peculiarly requires it. Further, this was not the apoſtle's occaſional practice, or an haſty wavering purpoſe; but he was determined upon it. *I determined*, ſays he, *not to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.* * 1 Cor. ii. 2. This theme, as it were, engroſſed all his thoughts; he dwelt ſo much upon it, as

* Which Dr. Doddridge renders—*Chriſt Jeſus, even that crucified one.* Chriſt Jeſus, and that under the moſt ignominious circumſtances poſſible, viz. as crucified, was the principal object of his ſtudy, and the ſubſtance of his preaching.

as if he had known nothing elſe: and as if nothing elſe had been worth knowing. Indeed he openly avows ſuch a neglect and contempt of all other knowledge, in compariſon of this: *I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt my Lord.* Phil. iii. 8. The crucifixion of Chriſt, which was the moſt ignominious circumſtance in the whole courſe of his abaſement, was an object in which he gloried; and he is ſtruck with horror at the thought of glorying in any thing elſe. *God forbid*, ſays he, *that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt!* Gal. vi. 14. In ſhort, he looked upon it as the perfection of his character as a chriſtian and an apoſtle, to be a conſtant ſtudent, and a zealous indefatigable preacher of the croſs of Chriſt.

But though a crucified Jeſus was of ſo much importance in a religion for ſinners; though this doctrine was the ſubſtance of the goſpel, and the principal object of the apoſtle's miniſtry; yet, as it was not the invention of human reaſon, ſo neither was it agreeable to the proud reaſonings, or corrupt taſte of the world. *The preaching of the croſs is to them that periſh, fooliſhneſs.* However, there were ſome that had the ſame ſentiment of it with St. Paul; even as many as were in the way of ſalvation. *Unto us that are ſaved, it is the power of God.* ver. 18. To ſuch, that weak and contemptible thing, the croſs, was the brighteſt diſplay of divine power to be found in the univerſe.

Mankind had had time enough to try what expedients their reaſon could find out for the reformation and ſalvation of a degenerate and periſhing world. The ſages and philoſophers of the heathen world had had a clear ſtage for many hundreds of years; and they might have done their utmoſt without controul. But, alas! did any of them, amid all their boaſted improvements, ſucceed in the experiment? Or could they ſo much as find out a method in which ſinners might be reconciled to their God? No;

No; in this moſt intereſting point, they were either ſtupidly thoughtleſs, or all their ſearches iſſued in perplexity, or in the moſt abſurd and impious contrivances. *Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world?* Let them appear, and produce their ſchemes upon this head. But *hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?* (ver. 20.) Yes, indeed he has, by propoſing a method moſt perfectly adapted for this end, which they not only never would have once thought of, but which, when revealed, their wiſdom cannot reliſh. Their wiſdom appears but folly, in that when they had the world to themſelves about four thouſand years, they could not in all that time find out any ſucceſsful expedient to amend and ſave it. And now, if any thing be done at all, it is time for God to do it; and how ſtrange, how unexpected, how myſterious was his expedient! and yet how glorious and effectual! *For after that, in the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe.* ver. 21. This was the contrivance for effecting what all the wiſdom and learning of the world could never effect; the plain unadorned preaching of Chriſt crucified; which, both for the matter and manner of it, was counted fooliſhneſs.

But how did the world bear this mortification of their intellectual pride? And what reception did this bounteous divine ſcheme meet with when revealed? Alas! I am ſorry to tell you: The prejudices of their education were different; but they were unitedly ſet againſt the goſpel. The Jews had been educated in a religion eſtabliſhed by a ſeries of miracles; and therefore they were extravagant in their demands of this ſort of evidence. Notwithſtanding all the miracles Chriſt was working daily before their eyes, they were perpetually aſking him, *What ſign ſheweſt thou?*— Thoſe that are reſolved not to be convinced, will be always complaining of the want of proof, and demanding

manding more to vindicate their infidelity. As for the Greeks, their prejudices were of another kind; it was even a proverb among them, that "miracles were for fools;" * and therefore they did not desire that sort of evidence. But *they seek after wisdom.* They had been accustomed to fine orations, strong reasoning, and a parade of learning; and these were the evidences they desired to recommend a doctrine to them. And, finding the doctrine of Christ crucified had none of these embellishments, they despised and rejected it as foolishness and nonsense.

The method of salvation by the crucifixion of a supposed malefactor, was so extremely opposite to the reasoning, pride, and prejudices of Jews and Gentiles, that they could not bear it. The Jews expected the Messiah would appear as a victorious temporal prince, who, instead of falling a prey to his enemies, would subdue them all with an irresistible power, and advance the family of David to universal empire. And of all other deaths, that of crucifixion was the most odious and abominable to them, because, according to the custom of the Romans, it was the punishment only of slaves; and by their own law it was pronounced accursed; *for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* Gal. iii. 13. Deut. xxi. 23. Hence, by way of contempt, the Jews called the blessed Jesus, *the Hanged Man.*—Nay, this was a shock to the faith of the apostles themselves, until their Jewish prejudices were removed by better information. Finding that, instead of setting up a glorious kingdom, their Master was apprehended by his enemies, and hang upon a cross, they had nothing to say, but *We trusted this was he that should have delivered Israel:* we simply thought so; but, alas! now we see our mistake. Luke xxiv. 21. No wonder the cross of Christ should be a stumbling-block to such as had imbibed such notions of the Messiah. When, instead of the power of signs and miracles, which they were

* *Thaumata morois.*

were extravagantly demanding, they ſaw him crucified in weakneſs, they could not admit the thought that this was that illuſtrious character of an univerſal king. They were ſo dazzled with worldly glory, and ſo inſenſible of their ſpiritual wants, that they had no notions of a ſpiritual Saviour, and a kingdom of grace; nor could they ſee how ſuch prophecies were accompliſhed in one that only profeſſed to deliver from the ſlavery of ſin and Satan, and the wrath to come. Hence they ſtumbled at the croſs, as an obſtacle which they could not get over. When Chriſt called Lazarus from the dead, he had crowds of followers, who attended his triumphant proceſſion into Jeruſalem as a mighty conqueror: and when he had fed ſo many thouſands with a few loaves, they were about forcibly to make him king; for they knew that one who could raiſe his ſoldiers to life after they had been killed, and ſupport an army with ſo little proviſions, could eaſily conquer the world, and reſcue them from the power of the Romans. But when they ſaw him ſeized by his enemies without making reſiſtance, or working a miracle for his own defence, they immediately abandoned him; and the hoſannas of the multitude were turned into another kind of cry, *Crucify him, crucify him.* And when they ſaw him hanging helpleſs and dying upon the croſs, it was demonſtration to them that he was an impoſtor. It was this that rendered the preaching of Chriſt by his apoſtles ſo unpopular among the Jews: It ſeemed to them like a panegyric upon an infamous malefactor: and they thought it an inſult to their nation to have ſuch a one propoſed to them as their Meſſiah. Thus Chriſt crucified was to the Jews a ſtumbling-block.

As to the Greeks, who were a learned philoſophical people, it ſeemed to them the wildeſt folly to worſhip one as a God who had been crucified as a malefactor; and to truſt in one for ſalvation who had not ſaved himſelf. Their Jupiter had his thunder, and according to their tradition, had cruſhed the formidable

midable rebellion of the giants againſt heaven: their Bacchus had avenged himſelf upon the deſpiſers of his worſhip; and the whole rabble of their deities had done ſome god-like exploit, if the fables of their poets were true: and would they abandon ſuch gods, and receive in their ſtead a deſpiſed Nazarene, who had been executed as the vileſt criminal by his own nation? Would they give up all their boaſted wiſdom and learning, and become the humbleſt diſciples of the croſs, and receive for their teachers a company of illiterate fiſhermen, and a tent-maker from the deſpiſed nation of the Jews, whom they held in the utmoſt contempt for their ignorance, bigotry, and ſuperſtition? No, the pride of their underſtandings could not bear ſuch a mortification. If their curioſity led them to be St. Paul's hearers, they expected to be entertained with a flouriſh of words, and fine philoſophic reaſoning; and when they found themſelves diſappointed, they pronounced him a babbler (Acts xvii. 18.) and his preaching fooliſhneſs.—Corinth, to which this epiſtle was ſent by St. Paul, was a noted city among the Greeks; and therefore, what he ſays upon this head was peculiarly pertinent and well applied.

The prejudices of the Jews and Greeks in this reſpect outlived the apoſtolic age, as we learn from the writings of the primitive fathers of the chriſtian church, who lived among them, and were converſant with them. Trypho the Jew, in a dialogue with Juſtin Martyr, about an hundred years after St. Paul wrote this epiſtle, charges it upon the chriſtians as the greateſt abſurdity and impiety, that they placed their hopes in a crucified man. Juſtin, after long reaſoning, conſtrains him at length to make ſundry conceſſions, as, that the prophecies which he had mentioned did really refer to the Meſſiah; and that, according to theſe prophecies, the Meſſiah was to ſuffer. 'But (ſays the Jew) that Chriſt ſhould be ſo ignominiouſly crucified; that he ſhould die a death which the law pronounces

pronounces accurſed, this we cannot but doubt; this I yet find a very hard thing to believe: and therefore if you have any further evidence upon this head, would willingly hear it.' Here you ſee the croſs was a ſtumbling block, which the Jews could not get over in a hundred years; nay, they have not got over it to this day. Lactantius, about three hundred years after Chriſt's birth, obſerves, that the ſufferings of Chriſt were wont to be caſt upon chriſtians as a reproach: it was thought a ſtrange and ſcandalous thing that they ſhould worſhip a man; a man that has been crucified, and put to the moſt infamous and tormenting death by men.* An heathen, in Minutius Fœlix, is introduced as ſaying, 'He who repreſents a man puniſhed for his crimes with the ſevereſt puniſhment, and the ſavage wood of the croſs, as the object of their worſhip, and a ceremony of their religion, aſcribes a very proper altar to ſuch abandoned and wicked creatures, that they may worſhip that which they deſerve to hang upon.' † And refering to the many barbarous perſecutions they then groaned under, he jeers them; 'See here,' ſays he, 'are threatenings for you, puniſhments, torture and croſſes, not to be adored, but endured.' ‡ 'The calumniating Greeks,' ſays Athanaſius, 'ridicule us, and ſet up a broad laugh at us, becauſe we regard nothing ſo much as the croſs of Chriſt.'

Thus, you ſee, the doctrine of the croſs was, of all other things, the moſt unpopular among Jews and Gentiles, and the moſt diſagreeable to their taſte. A man could not expect to ſhine, or cut a figure as a man

* — Paſſionem quæ velut opprobrium nobis objectari ſolet: quod & hominem, & ab hominibus inſigni ſupplicio affectum & excruciatum colamus — De ver. Sap. L. IV. c. 16.

† Qui hominem ſummo ſupplicio pro facinore punitum, & crucis ligna feralia eorum Ceremonias fabulatur, congruentia perditis ſceleratiſque tribuit altaria, ut id colant quod merentur. P. 9.

‡ Ecce vobis minae, ſupplicia, tormenta, etiam non adorandae, ſed ſubeundae cruces. P. 11.

man of ſenſe and learning, by making this the ſubject of his diſcourſes. But will Paul give it up, and diſplay his talents upon ſome more acceptable theme? This, as a fine ſcholar, he was very capable of; but he abhors the thought.

'Let the Jews and Greeks deſire what they pleaſe; we,' ſays he, 'will not humour them, nor gratify their taſte: however they take it, we will preach Chriſt crucified; though to the Jews he ſhould prove a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.' And there are ſome that reliſh this humble doctrine. To them that believe, both Jews and Greeks, whether learned or unlearned, whether educated in the Jewiſh or Pagan religion, however different their prejudices, or their natural taſtes, to all that believe, notwithſtanding theſe differences, Chriſt, that is, *Chriſt crucified, is the power of God and the wiſdom of God.* The wiſdom and power of God are not the only perfections that ſhine in this method of ſalvation by the croſs; but the apoſtle particularly mentions theſe, as directly anſwering to the reſpective demands of Jews and Greeks. If the Jew deſires the ſign of power in working miracles, the believer ſees in Chriſt crucified a power ſuperior to all the powers of miracles. If the Greek ſeeks after wiſdom, here, in a crucified Chriſt, the wiſdom of God ſhines in the higheſt perfection. Whatever ſign or wiſdom the Jew or Greek deſires and ſeeks after, the believer finds more than an equivalent in the croſs. This is the greateſt miracle of power, the greateſt myſtery of wiſdom in all the world.

The prejudices of the Jews and Gentiles were not only confined to the early ages of Chriſtianity; the ſame depraved taſte, the ſame contempt of the humble doctrines of the croſs may be found among us, though profeſſed Chriſtians: ſome reſemble the Jews, who were perpetually demanding ſigns: they affect viſions and impulſes, and all the reveries of enthuſiaſm, inſtead of the preaching of Chriſt crucified. Others,

like the Greeks, through an affectation of florid harangues, moral diſcourſes, and a parade of learning and philoſophy, naufeate this ſort of preaching, and count it fooliſhneſs. It is therefore high time for the miniſters of the goſpel to ſtand up as advocates for the croſs, and with a pious obſtinacy to adhere to this ſubject, whatever contempt and ridicule it may expoſe them to. For my part, I know not what I have to do, as a miniſter of the goſpel, but to preach Chriſt crucified. I would make him the ſubſtance, the center, the end of all my miniſtrations. *And if we*, or an angel from heaven, *preach unto you any other goſpel*—you know his doom—*let him be accurſed.* Gal. i. 9.

We are to conſider the apoſtles as ſent out into the world to reform and ſave the corrupt and periſhing ſons of men, and the preaching of Chriſt crucified as the mean they uſed for this important end. This is the formal view the apoſtle had of preaching Chriſt in this place, viz. as a mean found out by the wiſdom of God to ſave them that believe, after that all the wiſdom of the world had tried in vain to find out a method for this end. This is evident from ver. 21. *After that the world by all its wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching;* that is, by the preaching a crucified Saviour, which the world counts fooliſhneſs, *to ſave them that believe.* This is the excellency of this preaching, this is the reaſon why the apoſtle could not be prevailed upon by any motive to deſert it, that it is the only mean of ſalvation: and it is in this view I now intend to conſider it. And if your everlaſting ſalvation be of any importance to you, certainly this ſubject demands your moſt ſerious attention.

I have been the longer in explaining the context, becauſe it is ſo cloſely connected with the ſubject I have in view, and reflects light upon it. And I ſhall only add, that preaching Chriſt crucified is the ſame thing as preaching ſalvation through the ſufferings of Chriſt. His ſufferings were of long continuance, even from

from his conception to his refurrection; and they were of various kinds, poverty, wearineſs and labour, hunger and thirſt, contempt and reproach, buffetting, ſcourging and a thorny crown. But there are two words, which by a ſynecdoche are often uſed in ſcripture to ſignify all his ſufferings of every kind, from firſt to laſt; viz. his blood and his croſs. And the reaſon is, the ſhedding of his blood, and the death of the croſs, were the worſt kind and higheſt degree of his ſufferings. In his crucifixion all his other ſufferings were united and centered: this was a complete ſummary and conſummation of them all; and therefore, they are frequently included under this. In this latitude I ſhall uſe the word in this diſcourſe; which I hope you will take notice of, that no part of the meaning may eſcape you.

Our inquiry ſhall be,

What are the reaſons that the preaching of Chriſt crucified is, above all others, the beſt, and the only effectual mean for the ſalvation of ſinners?

Theſe reaſons may be reduced under two general heads; namely, That through the crucifixion of Chriſt, and through that only, a way is really opened for the ſalvation of ſinners; and that the preaching of Chriſt crucified makes ſuch a diſcovery of things, as has the moſt direct tendency to bring them to repentance, and produce in them that temper which is neceſſary to ſalvation. Or, in other words, in this way ſalvation is provided, and ſinners are made fit to enjoy it; both which are abſolutely neceſſary. Our world is deeply and univerſally ſunk in ſin. Men have caſt contempt upon the divine government, broken the divine law, and ſo incurred its penalty; they have forfeited the favour of God, and rendered themſelves liable to his diſpleaſure. Had mankind continued innocent, there would have been no difficulty in their caſe. It would be very plain what would be fit for the divine government to do with dutiful ſubjects. But, alas! rebellion againſt God has made its entrance into

into our world; and all its inhabitants are up in arms againſt Heaven. This has thrown all into confuſion, and rendered it a perplexing caſe what to do with them. In one view, indeed, the caſe is plain, viz. that proper puniſhments ſhould be executed upon them. This would appear evidently juſt to the whole univerſe, and no objection could be made againſt it, though the criminals themſelves, who are parties, and therefore not fit judges, might murmur againſt it as unmerciful and ſevere. But the difficulty is, how ſuch rebels may not only be delivered from the puniſhments they deſerve, but made happy for ever? If they cannot be ſaved in a way that diſplays the perfections of God, and does honour to his government; a way in which ſin will meet with no encouragement, but, on the other hand, an effectual warning will be given againſt it; a way in which depraved creatures may be ſanctified, and made fit for the pure bliſs of heaven; I ſay, if they cannot be ſaved in ſuch a way as this, they cannot be ſaved at all: their ſalvation is quite impoſſible; for each of theſe particulars is of ſuch importance, that it cannot be diſpenſed with. God is the beſt and moſt glorious Being in himſelf; and it is fit he ſhould do juſtice to his own perfections, and exhibit them in the moſt Godlike and glorious manner to his creatures; to do otherwiſe would be to wrong himſelf, to obſcure the brighteſt glory, and diſhonour the higheſt excellency. This therefore cannot be done: men and angels muſt be happy, in a way conſiſtent with his glory, otherwiſe they muſt periſh; for the diſplay of his glory is a greater good, and a matter of more importance than the happineſs of the whole creation. God is alſo the moral Governor of the world. And his government over our world is a government over a country of rebels: and that is a tender point, and requires a judicious management. An error in government in ſuch a caſe may have the moſt fatal conſequences, both as to the ruler and his ſubjects, in all parts of his dominions. A private perſon may

may, if he pleaſes, give up his rights, may pardon offenders, and conceal his juſtice, and other qualities for government; but a ruler is not at liberty in this caſe. He muſt maintain his character, make known his capacity for government, and ſupport the dignity of the law: otherwiſe, all might ruſh into confuſion and lawleſs violence. If the ruler of a ſmall kingdom on our little globe ſhould fail to diſcover his juſtice; if he ſhould pardon criminals, and admit them into favour, and into poſts of honour and profit, without giving proper expreſſions of his diſpleaſure againſt their conduct, and a ſtriking warning againſt all diſobedience, how fatal would be the conſequences? how ſoon would ſuch a ruler fall into contempt, and his government be unhinged! And how ſoon would his kingdom become a ſcene of confuſion and violence! Criminals might like ſuch an adminiſtration: but, I appeal to yourſelves, would you chooſe to live under it? Now, how much more terrible and extenſively miſchievous would be the conſequences, if the univerſal Ruler of men and angels, and of more worlds than we have heard the fame of, ſhould exerciſe ſuch a government over our rebellious world? It would be reproachful to himſelf; and it would be moſt injurious to his ſubjects: in ſhort, it might throw heaven and earth, and unknown regions of the univerſe, into coufuſion.† He muſt therefore diſplay his own rectoral virtues; he muſt maintain the honour of his government, he muſt ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt diſobedience, and deter his ſubjects from it; I ſay, he muſt do theſe things in ſaving the ſinners of Adam's race, or he cannot ſave them at all. Should he ſave them upon other terms, it would reflect diſhonour upon himſelf and adminiſtration; and it would be injurious to the good of the whole, which is always the end of a wiſe ruler; for the favour thus injudiciouſly

† Pardoning ſin, receiving into favour, and beſtowing happineſs, are not to be conſidered in this caſe as private favours; but they are acts of government.

ouſly ſhewn to a part of the creation in our world, might occaſion a more extenſive miſchief in other more important worlds; and ſo it would be promoting a private intereſt to the detriment of the public, which is always the character of a weak or wicked ruler. Again, ſinners cannot be ſaved, until their diſpoſitions be changed, ſo that they can reliſh and delight in the fruition and employments of the heavenly ſtate. Proviſion therefore muſt be made for this; otherwiſe, their ſalvation is impoſſible.

Now the way of ſalvation through Chriſt crucified, moſt completely anſwers theſe ends in the moſt illuſtrious manner.

1. The ſalvation of ſinners in this way gives the brighteſt diſplay of the perfections of God, and particularly of thoſe that belong to him as the ſupreme ruler of the rational world, and maintains the honour of his government.

Juſtice and clemency, duly tempered, and exerciſed with wiſdom, is a ſummary of thoſe virtues that belong to a good ruler. Now theſe are moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed in a happy conjunction in Chriſt crucified. Juſtice ſhines brighter than if every ſin had been puniſhed upon offenders, without any mercy; and mercy and clemency ſhine brighter than if every ſin had been pardoned, and every ſinner made happy, without any execution of juſtice. Mercy appears in turning the divine mind with ſuch a ſtrong propenſity upon the ſalvation of ſinners; and juſtice appears, in that when the heart of God was ſo much ſet upon it, yet he would not ſave them without a complete ſatisfaction to his juſtice. Mercy appears in providing ſuch a Saviour; and juſtice, in inflicting the puniſhment due to ſin upon him, without abatement, though he loved him more than the whole univerſe of creatures. Mercy, in transferring the guilt from the ſinner upon the ſurety, and accepting a vicarious ſatisfaction: juſtice, in exacting the ſatisfaction, and not paſſing by ſin, when it was but imputed to the darling

darling Son of God. Mercy, in pardoning and saving guilty sinners: justice, in punishing their sin. Mercy in justifying them, though destitute of all personal merit and righteousness: justice, in justifying them only and entirely on account of the merit and righteousness of Christ. Thus the righteousness or justice of God is declared not only in the punishment, but in the remission of sins, Rom. iii. 26. and we are justified freely through his grace, and in the mean time by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. (ver. 24.) Mercy appears in providing a Saviour of such infinite dignity: justice, in refusing a satisfaction from an inferior person. Mercy, in forgiving sin; justice, in forgiving not so much as one sin without a sufficient atonement. Mercy, rich free mercy towards the sinner: justice, strict inexorable justice towards the surety. In short, mercy and justice, as it were, walk hand in hand through every step of this amazing scheme. They are not only glorious each of them apart, but they mingle their beams, and reflect a glory upon each other. By this scheme of salvation by the cross of Christ, also the honour of the divine government is secured and advanced. The clemency and compassion of God towards his rebellious subjects are most illustriously displayed; but in the mean time he takes care to secure the sacred rights of his government. Though innumerable multitudes of rebels are pardoned, yet not one of them is pardoned until their rebellion is punished according to its demerit in the person of the surety. The precept of the law, which they had broken, was perfectly obeyed; the penalty which they had incurred was fully endured, not by themselves indeed, but by one that presented himself in their place: and it is only on this footing they are received into favour. So that the law is magnified, and made honourable, and the rights of government are preserved sacred and inviolable, and yet the prisoners of justice are set free, and advanced to the highest honours and blessedness.

2. In

2. In this way of salvation God's hatred to sin is discovered in the most striking light; the evil of sin is exposed in the most dreadful colours; and so an effectual warning is given to all worlds to deter them from it. Now it appears that such is the divine hatred against all sin, that God can by no means connive at it, or suffer it to pass without punishment; and that all the infinite benevolence of his nature towards his creatures cannot prevail upon him to pardon the least sin without an adequate satisfaction. Nay, now it appears, that when so malignant and abominable a thing is but imputed to his dear Son, his co-equal, his darling, his favourite, even he could not escape unpunished, but was made a monument of vindictive justice to all worlds. And what can more strongly expose the evil of sin? It is such an intolerably malignant and abominable thing, that even a God of infinite mercy and grace cannot let the least instance of it pass unpunished. It was not a small thing that could arm his justice against the Son of his love. But when he was but made sin for us, and was perfectly innocent in himself, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up unto death, the shameful, tormenting, and accursed death of the cross. Go, ye fools, that make a mock at sin, go and learn its malignity and demerit at the cross of Jesus. Who is it that hangs there writhing in the agonies of death, his hands and feet pierced with nails, his side with a spear, his face bruised with blows, and drenched with tears and blood, his heart melting like wax, his whole frame racked and disjointed; forsaken by his friends, and even by his Father; tempted by devils, and insulted by men? Who is this amazing spectacle of woe and torture? It is Jesus, the eternal word of God; the man that is his fellow; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth! his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. And what has he done? He did no wickedness; he knew no sin; but was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

ners. And whence then all these dreadful sufferings from heaven, earth, and hell? Why, he only stood in the law-place of sinners; he only received their sin by imputation. And you see what it has brought upon him! you see how low it has reduced him! and what an horrid evil must that be, which has such tremendous consequences, even upon the darling of Heaven! O! what still more dreadful havock would it have made, if it had been punished upon the sinner himself in his own person? Surely, all the various miseries which have been inflicted upon our guilty world in all ages, and even all the punishments of hell, do not so loudly proclaim the terrible desert and malignity of sin as the cross of Christ! And hence it follows, that in this way of salvation the most effectual warning is given to the whole universe, to deter them from disobedience. Rebels are pardoned, and made happy, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to others to repeat the transgression. And this was the tender and critical point. If rebels can be pardoned without reflecting dishonour upon the government and doing injury to the society, it is well: but how this shall be done, is the difficulty. But by the strange expedient of a crucified Saviour all the difficulty is removed. Sinners can no more presume upon sin, with a pretence that the supreme Ruler has no great indignation against it, or that there is no great evil in it; for, as I observed, his hatred to sin, and the infinite malignity of it appear no where in so striking and awful a light as in the cross of Christ. Let a reasonable creature take but one serious view of that, and sure he must ever after tremble at the thought of the least sin. Again, though sinners are pardoned in this way, yet no encouragement is given to the various territories of the divine dominions to flatter themselves that they also will be forgiven in case they should imitate the race of man in their rebellion. There is but one instance that we know of in the

whole univerſe of the forgiveneſs of ſin, and the reſtoration of rebels into favour, and we are ſo happy as to find that only inſtance in our guilty world. But what a ſtrange revolution has been brought about! what amazing miracles have been wrought in order to prepare the way for it! The eternal Son of God muſt become a man, and die the death of a criminal and a ſlave upon the croſs. The very firſt effort of pardoning grace went thus far; and is it poſſible it ſhould go any farther? or is there reaſon to hope that ſuch a miracle ſhould often be repeated? that the Son of God ſhould hang upon a croſs as often as any race of creatures may fall into ſin? Such hopes receive a damp from the caſe of the apoſtate angels, for whom he refuſed to die and aſſume the office of a Saviour. Or is there any other being that can perform that taſk for ſome other kingdom of rebels which Chriſt has diſcharged for the ſons of men? No; he only is equal to it; and none elſe has ſufficient dignity, power, or love. This therefore muſt ſtrike a terror into all worlds at the thought of ſin, and leave them no umbrage to preſume they ſhall eſcape puniſhment, when they obſerve that the redeemed from among men could not be ſaved but at ſo prodigious an expence, and that the fallen angels are ſuffered to periſh without any ſalvation provided for them at all.

3. In this way proviſion is made for the ſanctification of ſinners, that they may be fit for the fruitions and employments of the heavenly ſtate. Their taſte is ſo vitiated that they have no reliſh for that pure bliſs, and therefore can no more be happy there than a ſick man can reliſh the entertainments of a feaſt. And they are ſo far gone with the deadly diſeaſe of ſin, that they are not able to recover themſelves; nay, they are not ſo much as diſpoſed to uſe means for that end. They are eſtranged from God, and engaged in rebellion againſt him; and they love to continue ſo. They will not ſubmit, nor return to their

their duty and allegiance. Hence there is need of a ſuperior power to ſubdue their ſtubborn hearts, and ſweetly conſtrain them to ſubjection; to inſpire them with the love of God, and an implacable deteſtation of all ſin. And for this purpoſe the holy Spirit of God is ſent into the world: for this purpoſe he is at work from age to age upon the hearts of men. And though he be moſt ungratefully reſiſted, grieved, and deſpitefully treated, and he gives up many to the luſts of their own hearts, yet, numerous and glorious are the conqueſts he has gained over rebellious ſinners. Many a ſtubborn will has he ſweetly ſubdued: many an heart of ſtone has he ſoftened, and diſſolved into ingenuous repentance like ſnow before the ſun: many a depraved ſoul has he purified, and at length brought to the heavenly ſtate in all the beauties of perfect holineſs. And hence it is that there is any ſuch thing as true religion to be found upon earth, and that any of the ſons of men are recovered to obedience and happineſs. But for this ineſtimable bleſſing we are indebted to a crucified Chriſt. It is the dear purchaſe of his blood, and had it not been ſo purchaſed, it would never have been communicated to our guilty world; and conſequently never would one rebel have ſubmitted, never would one heart have felt the love of God, among all the ſons of men.

Thus, my brethren, you ſee a way is really opened for the ſalvation of ſinners through the crucifixion of Chriſt. And O! what an amazing, unexpected, myſterious way! how far beyond the reach of human wiſdom! and how brilliant a diſplay of the divine! To diſplay the perfections of God by occaſion of ſin more illuſtriouſly than if ſin had never entered into the world, and thus bring the greateſt good out of the greateſt evil—to pardon and ſave the ſinner, and yet condemn and puniſh his ſin—to give the brighteſt diſplay of juſtice in the freeſt exerciſe of mercy; and the richeſt diſcovery of mercy in the moſt

moſt rigorous execution of juſtice—to diſmiſs rebels from puniſhment, and advance them to the higheſt honours, and yet ſecure and even advance the honour of the government againſt which they had rebelled—to give the moſt effectual warning againſt ſin, even in rewarding the ſinner; and to let it paſs unpuniſhed, without making a bad precedent, or giving any encouragement to it—to magnify the law in juſtifying thoſe that had broken it—to diſcover the utmoſt hatred againſt ſin, in ſhowing the higheſt love to the ſinner—what an aſtoniſhing God-like ſcheme is this! What a ſtupendous diſplay of the infinite wiſdom of God! Could the Socrateſes, the Platos, and other oracles of the heathen world ever have found out an expedient to anſwer this end, and reconcile theſe ſeeming contradictions! No; this would have nonpluſed men and angels; for in what a ſtrange unthought-of way is it brought about! that the Son of God ſhould become the Son of man; the head of the univerſe appear in the form of a ſervant; the Author of life die upon a croſs; the Lawgiver become the ſubject of his own law, and ſuffer its penalty, though perfectly innocent! who would ever have thought of ſuch ſtrange events as theſe! This is to accompliſh aſtoniſhing things in an aſtoniſhing way. You may as well ſet an human underſtanding to draw the plan of a world, as to form ſuch a ſcheme as this. O! it is all divine; it is the wonder of angels; and the greateſt miracle in the univerſe.

Thus, you ſee, there are very good reaſons, reducible to this head, why the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be the grand weapon to deſtroy the kingdom of darkneſs, and reſcue ſinners, and bring them into a ſtate of liberty and glory.

And there are reaſons, equally important, that fall under the other head, viz. That the preaching of Chriſt crucified makes ſuch a diſcovery of things, as the moſt direct tendency to bring ſinners to repentance, and produce in them that temper which is neceſſary to their ſalvation. If

If a repreſentation of the moſt moving, the moſt alluring, and moſt alarming matters, can effect the mind of man, certainly the preaching of the croſs cannot be without effect; for,

1. The preaching of a crucified Saviour gives the ſtrongeſt aſſurance to the guilty ſons of men, that their offended God is reconcilable to them, and willing to receive them into favour again, upon their penitent return to him. The proviſion he has made for this end, and particularly his appointing his Son to be their Saviour, and delivering him up to the death of the croſs for them, leaves no room for doubt upon this head. It is full demonſtration that he is not only willing, but that his heart is earneſtly ſet upon reconciliation; otherwiſe he would not have been at ſuch infinite pains and expence to remove obſtructions, and clear the way for it. Now this is an aſſurance that the light of nature could never give. It leaves us dreadfully in the dark. And indeed, nothing but an expreſs declaration from God himſelf can inform us what he intends to do with criminals that lie entirely at mercy, and that he may do what he pleaſes with. The heathen world were either ſtupidly thoughtleſs about this point, or full of anxiety; and their philoſophers, amid all their boaſted knowledge, could only offer plauſible conjectures. And yet this aſſurance is neceſſary to keep up religion in the world, and encourage rebellious ſinners to return to obedience; for with what heart can they ſerve that God, as to whom they fear he will accept of no ſervice at their hands, or return to him, when they have no encouragement that he will receive them! The hope of acceptance is the ſpring of repentance and all attempts for reformation; and when once the ſinner concludes there is no hope, he lies down inactive and ſullen in deſpair, or confirms himſelf in hardened impenitence, and gives the full reign to his luſts. This the pſalmiſt obſerved long ago: *There is forgiveneſs with thee, O Lord, that thou mayeſt be feared.* Pſal. cxxx.

cxxx. 4. The fear of God is often uſed in ſcripture for the whole of religion; and ſo it ſeems taken here. As much as to ſay, "There is forgiveneſs with thee; and thou haſt aſſured us of it, that religion might be preſerved in the world, that mankind may not abandon thy ſervice as wholly in vain; or give up themſelves to ſin, as deſpairing of acceptance upon their repentance." O! what an acceptable aſſurance muſt this be to a guilty trembling ſinner! And how ſuitable a remedy to ſuch ſinners is the preaching of the croſs of Chriſt, which alone gives them this welcome aſſurance.

2. The preaching of a crucified Saviour gives the moſt moving diſplay of the love of God; and love is a ſtrong attractive to repentance and obedience.—There cannot be ſo ſtrong an expreſſion of love as the ſufferings of Chriſt. For God to give us life, and breath, and all things, what is this, in compariſon of the gift of his Son, and thoſe immortal bleſſings which he has purchaſed with his blood? To create ſuch a world as this for our reſidence, to furniſh it with ſuch a rich variety of bleſſings for our accommodation, and to exerciſe a tender providence over us every moment of our lives, this is amazing love and goodneſs. But what is this in compariſon of his dying love! To ſpeak an all-creating word, and to hang, and agonize, and expire upon a croſs; to give us the bleſſings of the earth, and to give the blood of his heart; theſe are very different things; they will not hold compariſon.

My brethren, let me make an experiment upon you with the croſs of Chriſt, and try with that weapon to ſlay your ſins, and break your hearts. Can you view ſuch agonies and queſtion the love that endured them? Or can you place yourſelves under the warm beams of that love, and yet feel no love kindled in your hearts in return? What! not the love of a worm for the dying love of a God! The apoſtle John reaſons very naturally, when he ſays, *We love him, because*

cauſe he firſt loved us. 1 John iv. 19. Love for love is but a reaſonable retaliation; eſpecially the love of a redeemed ſinner for the love of a crucified Saviour. St. Paul felt the energy of this love irreſiſtible: *The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us,* 2 Cor. v. 14. or according to the emphaſis of the original word,* it carries us away, like a reſiſtleſs torrent. And it appeared to him ſo ſhocking, that he could not mention it without weeping, that any ſhould be enemies to the croſs of Chriſt. Phil. iii. 18. Hear what expectations he had from the energy of his croſs who himſelf hung upon it. *I,* ſays he, *if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* Phil. iii. 18. This the evangeliſt teaches us to underſtand of the manner of his death, viz. his being raiſed up from the earth, and ſuſpended on the croſs. There, ſinners, he hung to attract your love; and can you reſiſt the force of this attraction, this almighty magnet? Jeſus, if I may ſo ſpeak, expects that this will carry all before it: that every ſinner who ſees him hanging there will immediately melt into repentance, and be drawn to him by the cords of love. And, O! can you find in your hearts to reſiſt? Where then is the gratitude? Is that generous principle quite dead within you? I muſt honeſtly tell you, if the love of a crucified Saviour does not attract your love, nothing elſe will: you will continue his enemies, and periſh as ſuch. This is the moſt powerful inducement that can be propoſed to you: all the reaſonings of the ableſt philoſophers, all the perſuaſions of the miniſters of the goſpel, all the goodneſs of God in creation and providence, will never prevail upon you, if your hearts are proof againſt the attraction of the croſs. But, bleſſed be his name who died upon it, many an obſtinate and reluctant heart has this croſs allured and ſubdued: and O! that we may all feel its ſweet conſtraints!

3. The preaching of Chriſt crucified gives ſuch a repreſentation of the evil of ſin, and the dreadful puniſhment

* *Synechei.* So Dr. Doddridge tranſlates it.

puniſhment due to it, as naturally tends to turn ſinners from it, and bring them to repentance. In the croſs of Chriſt the ſinner may ſee what malignity there is in ſin, when it brought ſuch heavy vengeance on the head of the ſurety. There the ſinner may ſee how God hates it, when he puniſhed it ſo ſeverely in his beloved Son. If the almighty Redeemer ſunk under the load, how ſhall the feeble ſinner bear up under it? If God ſpared not his own Son, who was but a ſurety, how can the ſinner eſcape, who is the original debtor? O ſinners, never call it cruel that God ſhould puniſh you for your ſins; ſo he dealt with Jeſus, his favourite; and how can you hope for more favour! Read the nature of ſin as written in characters of blood on the croſs of Chriſt, and ſurely you can make light of it no more. You muſt tremble at the very thought of it; and immediately reform and repent of it. All the harangues of moraliſts upon the intrinſic deformity, the unreaſonableneſs, the incongruity of vice, never can repreſent it in ſuch a ſhocking light as you view it in the ſufferings of Chriſt. And can you look upon your ſins piercing him, ſtretching him upon the croſs, and ſlaughtering him, and yet not mourn over them! O! can you indulge the murderous things that ſhed his blood! Then you practically pronounce him an impoſtor, and join the cry of the Jewiſh rabble, *Crucify him, Crucify him.*

4. The preaching of Chriſt crucified preſents us with ſuch a perfect pattern of obedience, as has at once the force of an example, and an inducement to holineſs. We need no longer view the law in theory: we ſee it reduced into an uniform practice, and preſented to the life, in the whole of our Lord's conduct towards God and man. We ſee one in our nature, upon our guilty globe in our circumſtances, behaving exactly agreeable to the divine law, and leaving us an example that we might follow his ſteps. And ſhall we not delight to imitate our beſt friend, and

and the moſt perfect pattern that ever was exhibited! O! how ſweet to walk as he walked in the world, and to trace the ſteps of his lovely feet! Until the doctrine of the croſs was introduced, the world was ſadly at a loſs about a rule of duty. All the admired writings of pagan antiquity cannot furniſh out one compleat ſyſtem even of morality; but here we have a perfect law, and a perfect example, which has the force of a law. Therefore, let us be followers of this incarnate God as dear children.

For an application:

1. Hence we may learn our great happineſs in enjoying the preaching of Chriſt crucified. It is but a very ſmall part of the world that has heard this joyful ſound; and the time has been, when none of the ſons of men enjoyed it in that full evidence which we are favoured with. Now ſince it pleaſes God, by this fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe, ſince this is the moſt effectual mean for our recovery from ſin and ruin—how great, how diſtinguiſhing, how peculiar is our privilege! It becomes us, my brethren, to know our happineſs that we may be thankful. How few among the ſons of men enjoy this privilege! How does the whole world lie in wickedneſs! Alas! they are fatally unconcerned, or fruitleſsly anxious about a way of reconciliation with God. Their prieſts and philoſophers can afford them no relief in this caſe; but either miſlead them or increaſe their perplexity. But we have the ſtrongeſt aſſurance that God is reconcilable to us; and the cleareſt diſcovery of the way. We have the moſt powerful inducements to repentance, and the moſt effectual reſtraints from ſin. And what gratitude does this call for from us to our divine Benefactor! and how ſolicitous ſhould we be to make a proper improvement of our peculiar advantages!

2. Hence we may learn the ſhocking guilt and danger of our modern infidels, the Deiſts, who, like the Greeks, count the preaching of Chriſt crucified

fooliſhneſs, and deny the Lord that bought them. This is to reject the beſt, the laſt, the only remedy. Now let them conſult their feeble reaſon; let them go to the oracles of wiſdom in the heathen world, and aſk of them how guilty offenders may be reſtored into favour, in conſiſtency with the honour of the divine perfections and government? Alas they can find no ſatisfactory anſwer. Now alſo they have loſt the ſtrongeſt motive to love and obedience, when they have turned away their eyes from the croſs. They have loſt the moſt full and amiable view of the divine nature and perfections that ever was exhibited to the world. Should they ſhut their eyes againſt the light of the ſun, and abhor all the beauties of nature, it would not be ſuch an aſtoniſhing inſtance of infatuation. Saint Paul repreſents it as the moſt amazing folly, nay, a kind of witchcraft and incantation, that any ſhould deſert the truth, that had ever had the leaſt view of Chriſt crucified. *O fooliſh Galatians! who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the truth, before whoſe eyes Jeſus Chriſt had been evidently ſet forth, crucified among you?* Gal. iii. 1. What wickedneſs, what madneſs, what an unnatural conſpiracy againſt their own lives muſt it be for men to reject the only expedient found out by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs for their ſalvation! What baſe ingratitude thus to requite the dying love of Jeſus! Can ſuch monſters expect ſalvation from his hands? No; they will fully cut themſelves off from all hope, and bring upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction. If the croſs of Chriſt does not break their hearts, it is impoſſible to bring them to repentance: the laſt and moſt powerful remedy has proved ineffectual: the laſt and ſtrongeſt effort of divine grace has been uſed with them in vain. Since they obſtinately reject the ſacrifice of Chriſt, there remains no other ſacrifice for their ſin, and nothing awaits them but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour them as adverſaries.

3. Hence

3. Hence we ſhould inquire what effect the preaching of Chriſt crucified has been upon us. Since this is the grand mean Divine Wiſdom has found out for the recovery of our wicked world, when all other means had been in vain, it is of the utmoſt importance to us that we ſhould inquire, whether it is likely to anſwer this end upon us. *It pleaſes God by this fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe.* Obſerve the limitation—*them that believe.* They, and only they can be ſaved by it. As for unbelievers, they cannot be ſaved in this, or any other way. Let us then abandon every other concern for a while, and ſeriouſly examine ourſelves in this point. Faith comes by hearing; and have we been brought to believe by hearing the preaching of the croſs? Do we reliſh this humble deſpiſed doctrine with peculiar pleaſure? Is it the life and nouriſhment of our ſouls, and the ground of all our hopes? Or do we ſecretly wonder what there can be in it, that ſome ſhould be ſo much affected with it? *To them that periſh*, ſays the apoſtle, and to them only, *the preaching of the croſs is fooliſhneſs.* And is that our dreadful characteriſtic? Or does a crucified Chriſt appear to us as the wiſdom of God, and the power of God, as he does to all them that believe, however different their natural taſtes and the prejudices of their education, and their outward circumſtances? Do we ſuſpend all our hopes upon the croſs of Chriſt? Do we glory in it above all other things, whatever contempt the world may pour upon it? Do we feel our neceſſity of a Mediator in all our tranſactions with God, and depend entirely upon the merit of his death for acceptance, ſenſible that we have no merit of our own to procure one ſmile from God? Have we ever had our hearts enlightened to behold the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt? Have we admired the ſcheme of ſalvation through a crucified Jeſus, as illuſtrating the perfections of God, and ſecuring the honour of the divine government, while it ſecures our ſalvation? And do we delight in it upon that account?

account? Or are we quite indifferent about the glory of God, if we may be but ſaved? Alas! hereby we ſhow we are entirely under the government of ſelfiſh principles, and have no regard for God at all. Do our thoughts frequently hover and cluſter about the croſs with the tendereſt affections? And has the view of it melted our hearts into the moſt ingenuous relentings for ſin, and given us ſuch a hatred againſt it, that we can never indulge it more? My brethren, put ſuch queſtions as theſe home to your hearts, and then endeavour to come to ſome juſt concluſion with regard to yourſelves.—And if the concluſion be againſt you, then,

4. Conſider your guilt and danger—conſider your ingratitude in rejecting all the love of God, and a crucified Saviour—your hardneſs of heart, that has not been broken by ſuch a moving repreſentation—the averſion of your ſouls to God, that have not been allured to him by the powerful attraction of the croſs—and O! conſider your danger: the laſt remedy has been tried upon you in vain: Chriſt's grand expedient for the ſalvation of ſinners has had no effect upon you. Had the religion of the Jews or of the heathen world failed to bring you to repentance, there might be ſtill ſome hope that the preaching of Chriſt crucified might prevail. But, alas! when that fails, how diſcouraging is your caſe! Therefore I pray you take the alarm, and labour to get your hearts affected with this repreſentation. O yield to the attraction of the croſs: let him draw you to himſelf, whom you ſee lifted up on it; and do not attempt ſuch an exploit of wickedneſs as to reſiſt the allurements of ſuch love. And O! cry to God for his enlightening ſpirit. Alas! it is your blindneſs that renders you unaffected with this moving object. Did you but know the Lord of glory who was crucified; did you but ſee the glory of the plan of ſalvation through his ſufferings, you would immediately become the captives of his croſs, conquered by the power

power of his love. And such, believe me, such you must be, before you can be saved.—But if the result of your examination turns out in your favour, then,

5. You may entertain the joyful hope of salvation; of salvation through one that was insulted as not able to save himself; of crowns of glory through him that wore the crown of thorns; of fulness of joy through the man of sorrows; of immortal life through one that died upon a cross; I say, you may entertain a joyful hope of all this; for in this way of salvation there is no hindrance, no objection. God will be glorified in glorifying you, the law magnified in justifying you. In short, the honour of God and his government concurs with your interest; and therefore if you heartily embrace this plan of salvation, you may be as sure that God will save you as that he will take care of his own glory, for they are inseparably connected. And do not your hearts, dead as they are, spring within you at the thought? Do you not long to see your Saviour on the throne, to whose cross you are indebted for all your hopes? And O! will you not praise his name while you live, and continue the song through all eternity? Are you not ready to anticipate the anthem of heaven, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: for thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood.* Rev. v. 9, 12.

Finally, let me congratulate * my reverend brethren on their being made ministers of the New Testament, which reveals that glorious and delightful subject, *Christ crucified*, in full light, and diffuses it through all their studies and discourses. The Lamb that was slain is the theme that animates the songs of angels and saints above, and even our unhallowed lips are allowed to touch it without profanation. Let us therefore, my dear brethren, delight to dwell upon it

* The author towards the end of the discourse writes, "At a Presbytery in Augusta, April 25, 1759;" which accounts for this particular address to ministers.

it. Let us do juſtice to the refined morality of the goſpel: let us often explain and enforce the precepts, the graces, and the virtues of chriſtianity; and teach men to live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in the world. But let us do this in an evangelical ſtrain, as miniſters of the crucified Jeſus, and not as the ſcholars of Epictetus or Seneca. Let us labour to bring men to an hearty compliance with the method of ſalvation through Chriſt; and then we ſhall find it comparatively an eaſier matter, a thing of courſe, to make them good moraliſts. Then a ſhort hint of their duty to God and man will be more forcible than whole volumes of ethics, while their ſpirits are not caſt in the goſpel-mould. Thus may we be enabled to go on, till our great Maſter ſhall take our charge off our hands, and call us to give an account of our ſtewardſhip!

SERMON XXV.

INGRATITUDE TO GOD AN HEINOUS BUT GENERAL INIQUITY.

2 CHRON. xxxii. 25. *But Hezekiah rendered not again, according to the benefit done unto him.*

AMONG the many vices that are at once univerſally decried, and univerſally practiſed in the world, there is none more baſe or more common than ingratitude; ingratitude towards the ſupreme Benefactor. Ingratitude is the ſin of individuals, of families, of churches, of kingdoms, and even of all mankind. The guilt of ingratitude lies heavy upon the whole race of men, though, alas! but few of them feel and lament

lament it. I have felt it of late with unuſual weight; and it is the weight of it that now extorts a diſcourſe from me upon this ſubject. If the plague of an ungrateful heart muſt cleave to us while in this world of ſin and imperfection, let us at leaſt lament it; let us bear witneſs againſt it; let us condemn ourſelves for it; and let us do all we can to ſuppreſs it in ourſelves and others. I feel myſelf, as it were, exaſperated, and full of indignation againſt it, and againſt myſelf as guilty of it. And in the bitterneſs of my ſpirit I ſhall endeavour to expoſe it to your view in its proper infernal colours, as an object of horror and indignation.

None of us can flatter ourſelves that we are in little or no danger of this ſin, when even ſo good and great a man as Hezekiah did not eſcape the infection. In the memoirs of his life, which are illuſtrious for piety, zeal for reformation, victory over his enemies, glory and importance at home and abroad, this, alas! is recorded of him, "That he *rendered not again* to his divine Benefactor, *according to the benefit done unto him;* for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jeruſalem."

Many had been the bleſſings and deliverances of this good man's life. I ſhall only particularize two, recorded in this chapter. The Aſſyrians had overrun a great part of the country, and intended to lay ſiege to Jeruſalem. Their haughty monarch, who had carried all before him, and was grown inſolent with ſucceſs, ſent Hezekiah a blaſphemous letter, to intimidate him and his people. He profanely bullies and defies Hezekiah and his God together; and Rabſhakeh, his meſſenger, comments upon his maſter's letter in the ſame ſtyle of impiety and inſolence. But here obſerve the ſignal efficacy of prayer! Hezekiah, Iſaiah, and no doubt many other pious people among the Jews, made their prayer to the God of Iſrael; and, as it were, complained to him of the threatenings and profane blaſphemy of the Aſſyrian monarch.

monarch. Jehovah hears, and works a miraculous deliverance for them. He ſends out an angel (one was ſufficient) who deſtroyed in one night, as we are elſewhere told (2 Kings xix. 35.) no leſs than an hundred fourſcore and five thouſand men; which extenſive ſlaughter, a Jewiſh tradition tells us, was made by means of lightning; a very ſuppoſable and ſufficient cauſe. Sennacherib, with the thin remains of his army, fled home inglorious; and his two ſons aſſaſſinated him at an idolatrous altar. Thus Jeruſalem was freed from danger, and the country reſcued from ſlavery and the ravages of war. Nay, we find from profane hiſtory, that this dreadful blow proved fatal in the iſſue to the Aſſyrian monarchy, which had oppreſſed the world ſo long; for upon this the Medes, and afterwards other nations, threw off their ſubmiſſion; and the empire fell to pieces. Certainly ſo illuſtrious a deliverance as this, wrought immediately by the divine hand, was a ſufficient reaſon for ardent gratitude.

Another deliverance followed upon this. Hezekiah was ſick unto death; that is, his ſickneſs was in its own nature mortal, and would have been unto death, had it not been for the miraculous interpoſition of Providence. But, upon his prayer to God, he was recovered, and fifteen years added to his life. This alſo was great cauſe of gratitude. And we find it had this effect upon him, while the ſenſe of his deliverance was freſh upon his mind; for in his euchariſtic ſong upon his recovery, we find theſe grateful ſtrains: *The living, the living he ſhall praiſe thee, as I do this day: the father to the children ſhall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to ſave me; therefore we will ſing my ſongs to the ſtringed inſtruments all the days of our life.* But, alas! thoſe grateful impreſſions wore off in ſome time; and pride, that uncreaturely temper, began to riſe. He began to think himſelf the favourite of heaven, in ſome degree, on account of his own perſonal goodneſs. He indulged his vanity

vanity in oſtentatiouſly expoſing his treaſures to the Babylonian meſſengers: which was the inſtance of ſelfiſh pride and ingratitude that ſeems here particularly referred to.

This pride and ingratitude paſſed not without evidences of the divine indignation; for we are told, *therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jeruſalem.* As the crime was not peculiar to him, ſo neither is the puniſhment. Nations and individuals have ſuffered in this manner from age to age; and under the guilt of it we and our country are now languiſhing.

In order to make you the more ſenſible of your ingratitude towards your divine Benefactor, I ſhall give you a brief view of his mercies towards you, and expoſe the aggravated baſeneſs of ingratitude under the reception of ſo many mercies.

Mercy has poured in upon you on all ſides, and followed you from the firſt commencement of your exiſtence: rich, various, free, repeated, uninterrupted mercy. The bleſſings of a body wonderfully and fearfully made, complete in all its parts, and not monſtrous in any: the bleſſing of a rational immortal ſoul, preſerved in the exerciſe of ſound reaſon for ſo many years, amid all thoſe accidents that have ſhattered it in others, and capable of the exalted pleaſures of religion, and the everlaſting enjoyment of the bleſſed God, the ſupreme good: the bleſſing of a large and ſpacious world, prepared and furniſhed for our accommodation; illuminated with an illuſtrious ſun, and the many luminaries of the ſky; the earth enriched and adorned with trees, vegetables, various ſorts of grain, and animals, for our ſupport or convenience; and the ſea a medium of extenſive trade, and an inexhauſtible ſtore of fiſhes: the bleſſings of the early care of parents and friends, to provide for us in the helpleſs days of infancy, and direct or reſtrain us in the giddy precipitant years of youth: the bleſſing of being born in the adult age of the world,

when the improvements of art are carried to ſo high a degree of perfection; of being born, not among ſavages in a wilderneſs, but in a humanized, civilized country; not on the burning ſandy deſarts of the torrid zone, nor under the frozen ſky of Lapland or Iceland, but in a temperate climate, as favourable to the comfort and continuance of life as moſt countries upon earth; not in a barren ſoil, ſcarcely affording proviſion of the coarſeſt ſort for its inhabitants, but in a land of unuſual plenty, that has never felt the ſeverities of famine: the bleſſing of not being a race of ſlaves, under the tyranny of an arbitrary government, but free-born Britons and Virginians in a land of liberty: theſe birth-right bleſſings are almoſt peculiar to us and our nation. Let me enumerate alſo the bleſſing of a good education; good at leaſt, when compared to the many ſavage nations of the earth: the bleſſing of health for months and years: the bleſſing of raiment ſuited to the various ſeaſons of the year: the bleſſings of rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, of ſummer and winter, of ſeed-time and harveſt; the agreeable viciſſitude of night and day; the refreſhing repoſe of ſleep, and the activity and enjoyment of our waking hours; the numerous and refined bleſſings of ſociety, and the moſt endearing relations; the bleſſings included in the tender names of friend, huſband or wife, parent or child, brother or ſiſter; the bleſſings of peace; peace, in the midſt of a peaceful country, which has been our happy lot till of late years; or peace, in the midſt of a ravaged bleeding country, which is a more diſtinguiſhed and ſingular bleſſing, and which we now enjoy, while many of our fellow-ſubjects feel a terrible reverſe: bleſſings in every age of life; in infancy, in youth, in adult age, and in the decays of old age: bleſſings by ſea and land, and in every country where we have reſided: in ſhort, bleſſings as numerous as our moments, as long continued as our lives: bleſſings perſonal and relative, public and private:

private: for while we have the air to breathe in, the earth to tread upon, or a drop of water to quench our thirſt, we muſt own we are not left deſtitute of bleſſings from God. From God, I ſay, all theſe bleſſings originally flow; and to him we are principally obliged for them. Indeed they are conveyed to us by means of our fellow-creatures; or they ſeem to be the ſpontaneous productions of natural cauſes, acting according to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature. But then it was God, the Fountain of being and of all good, that gave our fellow-creatures the diſpoſition, the ability, and the opportunity of conveying theſe bleſſings to us; and it is the great God who is the Author of thoſe cauſes which ſpontaneouſly produce ſo many bleſſings for our enjoyment, and of thoſe laws of nature, according to which they act. Theſe are but channels, channels cut by his hand; and he is the ſource, the ocean of bleſſings. Creatures are but the hands that diſtribute his charity through a needy world; but his is the ſtore from which they derive their ſupplies. On this account therefore we ſhould receive all theſe bleſſings as gifts from God, and feel ourſelves obliged to him, as the ſupreme original Benefactor. Beſides, it is very probable to me, that in order to beſtow ſome of theſe bleſſings upon us by means of natural cauſes, God may give theſe cauſes a touch to turn them in our favour, more than they would be according to the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature; a touch ſo efficacious as to anſwer the kind deſign; though ſo gentle and agreeable to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, as not to be perceivable, or to caſt the ſyſtem of nature into diſorder. The bleſſings conveyed in this way, are not only the gifts of his hand, but the gifts of his immediate hand.

Therefore let God be acknowledged the ſupreme, the original Benefactor of the world, and the proper Author of all our bleſſings; and let all his creatures, in the height of their benevolence and uſefulneſs, own that they are but the diſtributors of his alms,

or

or the inſtruments of conveying the gifts of his hand. Let us acknowledge the light of yonder ſun, the breath that now heaves our lungs, and fans the vital flame, the growing plenty that is now burſting its way through the clods of earth, the water that bubbles up in ſprings that flows in ſtreams and rivers, or rolls at large in the ocean; let us own, I ſay, that all theſe are the bounties of his hand, who ſupplies with good the various ranks of being, as high as the moſt exalted angel, and as low as the young ravens, and the graſs of the field. Let him ſtand as the acknowledged Benefactor of the univerſe to inflame the gratitude of all to him, or to array in the crimſon colours of aggravated guilt the ingratitude of thoſe ſordid, ſtupid wretches who ſtill continue unthankful.

The poſitive bleſſings I have briefly enumerated, have ſome of them been interrupted at times: but even the interruption ſeemed only intended to make way for ſome deliverance; a deliverance that re-inſtated us in the poſſeſſion of our former bleſſings with a new and ſtronger reliſh, and taught us, or at leaſt was adapted to teach us ſome uſeful leſſons, which we were not likely to learn, had not our enjoyment been a while ſuſpended. This very hour let us turn our eyes backward, and take a review of a length of ten, twenty, forty, or ſixty years; and what a ſeries of deliverances riſes upon us! Deliverances from the many dangers of childhood, by which many have loſt their limbs, and many their lives! deliverance from many threatening and fatal accidents; deliverances from exquiſite pains, and from dangerous diſeaſes; deliverances from the gates of death, and the mouth of the grave; and deliverances for yourſelves, and for your dear families and friends. When ſickneſs, like a deſtroying angel, has entered your neighbourhood, and made extenſive havock and deſolation around you, you and yours have eſcaped the infection, while you were every day in anxious expectation of the dreadful viſit, and trembling at the dubious

bious fate of ſome dear relative, or your own: or if it has entered your houſes, like a meſſenger of death, it has not committed its uſual ravages in them. Or if it has torn from your hearts one or more members of your family, ſtill you have ſome left, or perhaps ſome new members added to make up the loſs. When you have been in deep diſtreſs, and covered with moſt tremendous glooms, deliverance has dawned in the moſt ſeaſonable hour, and light and joy have ſucceeded to nights of darkneſs and melancholy. In ſhort, your deliverances have been endleſs and innumerable. You appear this day ſo many monuments of delivering goodneſs. You have alſo ſhared in the deliverances wrought for your country and nation in former and latter times: deliverances from the open violences and clandeſtine plots and inſurrections of enemies abroad, and traitors and rebels at home: deliverances from the united efforts of both to ſubvert the Britiſh conſtitution, and enſlave free-born Britons to civil or eccleſiaſtical tyranny, or a medley of both;—and deliverances from drought, and the threatening appearances of famine, which we have ſo lately experienced in theſe parts; and yet they are long enough paſt to be generally forgotten!

In theſe inſtances of deliverances, as well as in the former or poſitive bleſſings, let the great God be acknowledged the Original Efficient, whatever creatures he is pleaſed to make uſe of as his inſtruments. Fortuitous accidents are under his direction; and neceſſary cauſes are ſubject to his controul. Diſeaſes are his ſervants, his ſoldiers; and he ſends them out, or recalls them, according to his pleaſure.

And now mention the benefactor, if you can, to whom you are a thouſandth part ſo much obliged as to this Benefactor. What a profuſion of bleſſings and deliverances has the Almighty made you the ſubjects of! And, O! what obligations of gratitude do ſuch favours lay upon you! What ardent love, what ſincere thankſgiving, what affectionate duty do they require

require of you! These are the cords of love, the bonds of a man, wherewith he would draw you to obedience.

Dare you now make the inquiry, What returns has this divine Benefactor received from you for all this goodness? Alas! the discovery which this inquiry will make may convict, shock, confound, and mortify us all; for we are all, in a prodigious degree, though some much more than others, guilty in this respect, guilty of the vilest ingratitude. Alas! are there not many of you that do not return to God the gratitude of a dog to his master? That brute animal who receives but crumbs and blows from you, will welcome you home with a thousand fond and obliging motions. The very dull ox you fodder, knows his owner. But, O! the more than brutal ingratitude of reasonable creatures! Some of you perhaps do not so much as acknowledge the agency of Providence in these enjoyments, but, affecting a very unphilosophical infidelity under the name of philosophy, you make natural causes the authors of all good to you, without the agency of the first Mover of all the springs of nature. Others of you, who may be orthodox in your faith as to this point, yet are practical infidels, the most absurd and inconsistent sort in the world; that is, while you verbally acknowledge, and speculatively believe the agency of Providence in these things, yet you live as if there was no such thing: you live thoughtless of the divine Benefactor, and disobedient to him for days and years together. The very mercies he bestows upon you, you abuse to his dishonour, by making them occasions of sin. Do not your consciences now convict you of that monster sin, Ingratitude, the most base, unnatural, and yet indulged gratitude? How do you resent it, if one whom you have deeply obliged should prove ungrateful, and use you ill? But it is impossible any one of your fellow-creatures should be guilty of such enormous ingratitude towards you

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as you are guilty of towards God; becauſe it is impoſſible any one of them ſhould be ſo ſtrongly obliged to you as you are to him.

Ye children of God, his peculiar favourites, whoſe hearts are capable of and do actually feel ſome generous ſenſations of gratitude, what do you think of your conduct towards ſuch a Benefactor? I ſpeak particularly to you, becauſe you are moſt likely to feel what I ſay. Have you rendered again to your God according to the benefits done you? O! are you not mortified and ſhocked to reflect upon your ingratitude, your ſordid monſtrous ingratitude? Do you not abhor yourſelves becauſe you were capable of ſuch baſe conduct? From you I expect ſuch a generous reſentment. But as to others, they are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, dead toward God, and therefore it is no wonder if they are dead to all penitential ingenuous relentings for their ingratitude.

But if all this does not ſuffice to make you ſenſible of your enormous guilt in this particular, let me lay before you an inventory of ſtill richer bleſſings. At the head of this ſtands Jeſus Chriſt, the unſpeakable gift of God. *God ſo loved the world* (hear it men and angels, with grateful wonder!) *as to give his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* John iii. 16. *God ſent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be ſaved.* John iii. 17. The comforts of this life alone would be a very inadequate proviſion for creatures who are to exiſt for ever in another; for what are ſixty or ſeventy years in the long duration of an immortal being! But in the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, are contained the moſt ample proviſions for your immortal ſtate. Jeſus Chriſt is ſuch a gift as draws all other gifts after it: for ſo the apoſtle argues, *He that ſpared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. And the purpoſes for which he gave this gift, render it the more

more aſtoniſhing. He gave him not only to rule us by his power, but to purchaſe us with the blood of his heart. He gave him up to death, even the death of the croſs. In conſequence of which an œconomy of grace, a miniſtry of reconciliation, is ſet up in our guilty world. Various means are appointed, and various endeavours are uſed to ſave you periſhing ſinners. For your ſalvation Jeſus now intercedes in his native heaven, at the right hand of God. For your ſalvation the holy Spirit ſtrives with you; conſcience admoniſhes you; Providence draws you by bleſſings, and drives you by chaſtiſements; angels miniſter to you; Bibles are put into your hands; miniſters perſuade you; friends adviſe you; and thouſands of ſaints pray for you. For this end prayer, preaching, baptiſm, and the Lord's ſupper, and a great variety of means of grace are inſtituted. For this end heaven is prepared and furniſhed with many manſions; the pearly gates open, and dart their ſplendors from afar to attract our eyes; and things which the eye, that has ſeen ſo many things, had never ſeen; which the ear, that has had ſtill more extenſive intelligence, had never heard; nor the heart of man, which is even unbounded in its conceptions, had never conceived, are brought to light by the goſpel. Nay, for this purpoſe, your ſalvation, Sinai thunders, Hell roars and throws its devouring flames, even to warn a ſtupid world not to plunge themſelves into that place of torment. In ſhort, the kind deſigns of redeeming-love run through the whole œconomy of Providence towards our world. Heaven and earth, and in the ſenſe mentioned, hell itſelf, are ſtriving to ſave you. The ſtrong-holds of ſin and Satan, in which you are held priſoners, are attacked in kindneſs to you from all quarters. What beneficent efforts, what heroic exploits of divine goodneſs are theſe! And, bleſſed be God, theſe offorts are not in vain.

The celeſtial regions are faſt peopling, though, alas! not ſo faſt as the land of darkneſs, with numerous colonies

colonies from our guilty globe. Even in these dregs of time when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, Jesus is gaining many hearts and saving many souls, in the various apartments of his church. Tho' you and thousands more should be left, and continue to neglect, yet such excellency shall not want admirers, such a physician shall not want employ in our dying world. No, *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* Isa. liii. 11. And I doubt not but there are some among you who are the trophies of his victorious love,—of his victorious love, I say; for it is by the force of love he sweetly conquers.

Now you, my brethren, are the subjects of this administration of grace; with you these means are used for your salvation: to you Jesus is offered as a Saviour; and heaven and earth are striving to lodge you safe in his arms. You should not rejoice in the wants of others; but certainly it may make you the more sensible of your peculiar obligations, to reflect that your lot in this respect is singular. It is but a very small part of mankind that enjoy these great advantages for a happy immortality. You live under the gospel, while the most of the nations of the earth are sunk in heathen idolatry, groaning under Popish tyranny, seduced by Mahometan imposture, or hardened in Jewish infidelity.

And what peculiar obligations of gratitude result from such peculiar distinguishing favours? Men have obliged you, and you feel the obligation. But can men, can angels, can the whole created universe bestow such gifts upon you, and make such provisions for you as those which have been mentioned? Gifts of infinite value, dear to the Giver; provisions for an everlasting state; an everlasting state of as complete happiness as your nature, in its highest improvements, is capable of. These are favours worthy of God; favours that bespeak him God. And must he

not then be the object of your ſupreme gratitude? Can any thing in the world be more reaſonable?

And yet — hear, O earth, with horror; be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this; be ye horribly afraid! how little gratitude does God receive from our world after all! How little gratitude from you, on whom theſe favours are ſhowered down with diſtinguiſhed profuſion! Do not many of you neglect the unſpeakable gift of God, Jeſus Chriſt, as well as that ſalvation which he bought with his blood? Do you not ungratefully neglect the means of your ſalvation and reſiſt the generous efforts that are uſed from all quarters to ſave you? O! the mountainous load of ingratitude that lies upon you! enough to ſink the whole world into the depth of hell.

But I muſt now addreſs ſuch of you who are ſtill more deeply obliged to your divine Benefactor, and whoſe ingratitude therefore is black and horrid; I mean ſuch of you who not only have ſhared in the bleſſings and deliverances of life, and lived under the advantages of a diſpenſation of grace, but have experimentally known the love of God to your ſouls in a manner peculiar to yourſelves, and are actually entitled to all the unknown bleſſings prepared for thoſe that love him. If I am ſo happy as to belong to your number, I am ſure I am ſo unhappy as to ſhare deeply with you in the guilt, the black guilt of ingratitude. When you were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, God quickened you, out of his great love wherewith he loved you. When you were ruſhing on towards deſtruction, in the enchanting paths of ſin, he checked your mad career, and turned your faces heavenward. When you were ſunk into ſorrows, borne down with a ſenſe of guilt, and trembling every moment with the fears of immediate execution, he relieved you, led you to Jeſus, and, as it were, lodged you ſafe in his arms. When diſmal glooms have again gathered upon your minds, and overwhelming fears ruſhed again upon you like a deluge, he has relieved

lieved you again by leading you to the ſame almighty and ever-conſtant Saviour. When your graces and virtues have withered in the abſence of the Sun of righteouſneſs, he has again riſen upon you with healing in his wings, and revived your languiſhing ſouls, He has ſhed abroad his love in your hearts, which has made this wretched wilderneſs a paradiſe to you. He has at times afforded you, as you humbly hoped, joy and peace in believing; yea, even cauſed you to rejoice with *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* He has met you in your retirements, and allowed you to converſe with him in his ordinances, with the heart of a friend. He has, as it were, unlocked his peculiar treaſures to enrich you, and given you an unſhaken title to the moſt glorious inheritance of the ſaints in light. He has made you his own, his own in a peculiar ſenſe; his people, his friends, his children. You are indeed his favourites: you were even ſo long before time began. He loved you with an everlaſting love, therefore with loving kindneſs has he drawn you; and having loved you once, he will love you always, and he will continue in his love to all eternity. *Neither life, nor death, things preſent or things to come, ſhall ever be able to ſeparate you from his love.* Rom. viii. 38, 39. His love to you is an unbounded ocean, that ſpreads over eternity, and makes it, as it were, the channel or the ocean of your happineſs. In you he intends to ſhew to all worlds what glorious creatures he can form of the duſt, and of the polluted fragments of degenerate human nature. What is all the profeſſion of kings to their favourites, what are all the benefactions of creatures, nay, what are all the bounties of the divine hand itſelf within the compaſs of time, when compared to theſe aſtoniſhing, unparalleled, immortal, infinite, God-like favours? They all dwindle into obſcurity, like the ſtars of the night in the blaze of noon.

And now I am almoſt afraid to turn your thoughts to enquire, what returns you have made for all theſe favours

favours, leſt you ſhould not be able to bear the ſhock. You know you have a thouſand times repeated Hezekiah's offence. I need not be particular. Your conſcience accuſes you, and points out the particulars; and I ſhall only join the cry of conſcience againſt you, O! the ingratitude! O! the baſe, vile, unnatural, horrid, unprecedented ingratitude! From you your God might have expected better things; from you, whom he has ſo peculiarly, ſo infinitely obliged, and whoſe hearts he has made capable of generous ſenſations. But, O! the ſhocking, horrid ingratitude!—Let your hearts burſt into a flood of ſorrows at the thought. They may be juſtly too full to allow us to ſpeak much upon it; but, O! they can never be too full of ſhame, confuſion, and tender relentings for the crime. Methinks the thought muſt break the hardeſt heart among us.

Let me now add a conſideration, which gives an aſtoniſhing emphaſis to all that has been ſaid. All this profuſion of mercy, perſonal and relative, temporal and ſpiritual, is beſtowed upon creatures that deſerve not the leaſt mercy; creatures that deſerve to be ſtripped naked of every mercy; nay, that deſerve to be made miſerable in time and eternity; creatures that deſerve not to breathe this vital air, to tread the ground, or drink the ſtream that runs waſte through the wilderneſs, much leſs to enjoy all the bleſſings which the infinite merit of Jeſus could purchaſe, or the infinite goodneſs of God can beſtow; creatures that are ſo far from deſerving to be delivered from the calamities of life, that they deſerve to have them all heightened and multiplied, till they convey them to the more intolerable puniſhments of hell; creatures that are ſo far from making adequate returns, that they are perpetually offending their God to his face; and every day receiving bleſſings from him, and every day ſinning againſt him. O! aſtoniſhing! moſt aſtoniſhing! This wonder is pointed out by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who beſt knows what

is

is truly marvellous. *The moſt High*, ſays he, *is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.* Luke vi. 35. *Your heavenly Father maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.* Matt. v. 45.

It need afford you no ſurpriſe, if my ſubject ſo overwhelms me as to diſable me from making a formal application of it. I leave you to your own thoughts upon it. And I am apt to think they will conſtrain you to cry out in a conſternation with me, 'O! the amazing, horrid, baſe, unprecedented ingratitude of man! And O! the amazing, free, rich, overflowing, infinite, unprecedented goodneſs of God! Let theſe two miracles be the wonder of the whole univerſe!

One prayer, and I have done. May our divine Benefactor, among his other bleſſings, beſtow upon us that of a thankful heart, and enable us to give ſincere, fervent, and perpetual praiſe to his name, through Jeſus Chriſt, his unſpeakable gift! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXVI.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND THEIR CONSEQUENT JOYS AND BLESSINGS.

ISAIAH liii. 10, 11. *When thou ſhalt make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the travail of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied.**

THIS chapter contains a moſt lively and moving account of very tragical ſufferings; and, if we have but a ſmall ſhare of humanity, we cannot hear it without being affected, even though we did not know the perſon concerned. Here is one ſo mangled and disfigured, that he has *no form or comelineſs; one deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief; one wounded, bruiſed, oppreſſed, afflicted; one brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter; one cut off out of the land of the living.* And who is he? Were he an enemy, or a malefactor, we could not but pity him. But this was not his character; for *he had done no violence, neither was there guile found in his mouth.* And he was ſo far from being our enemy, that *he hath borne our griefs and carried our ſorrows; he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions; he was bruiſed for our iniquities,* not for his own. Were he a child or a friend that had ſuffered ſuch things, it would raiſe all our mournful and ſympathizing paſſions to hear the hiſtory.—But what if this ſhould be *the man that is God's fellow,* the Redeemer, to whom we are bound by the moſt endearing

* The Sermon is dated Hanover (a county, if I miſtake not, in Virginia) July 11, 1756; and is evidently a Sacramental Diſcourſe.

dearing obligations! a perſon of infinite dignity and perfect innocence, our beſt friend, and only Saviour! What if it ſhould be he? Would not this move your hearts, and raiſe all your tender paſſions? Or ſhall he die in ſuch agonies unpitied, unlamented, unbeloved, when even a dying criminal excites our compaſſion? What do you think would be the iſſue, if I ſhould make an experiment of this to-day? If I ſhould make a trial what weight the ſufferings of Jeſus will have upon your hearts? Do you think the repreſentation of his ſufferings and love would have any effect upon you? That they may have this effect is my deſign in the proſecution of this ſubject; for that it is Jeſus who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the ſubject of theſe ſufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of paſſages quoted from this chapter to him in the New Teſtament. This chapter has been a ſucceſsful part of the ſcriptures; and there are ſome now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when he aſked Philip, *Of whom ſpeakeſt the prophet this? of himſelf, or ſome other man? And Philip opened his mouth, and began at the ſame ſcripture, and preached unto him Jeſus: and he believed with all his heart, and was baptized; and went on his way homeward* and heavenward *rejoicing*. Acts viii. 32, 35. This was the chapter that opened to the penitent Earl of Rocheſter the way of ſalvation through the ſufferings of Chriſt, which alone relieved his mind from the horrors of guilt, and conſtrained him to hope that even ſuch a ſinner as he might find mercy. O! that it may have the ſame effect upon you, my brethren, to-day, that with the eunuch you may return home rejoicing!

The deſign and method I have now in view is only to illuſtrate and improve the ſeveral parts of my text, eſpecially thoſe that repreſent how pleaſing and ſatisfactory the converſion and ſalvation of ſinners by the death of Chriſt is to him.

1. *When*

1. *When* * *thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.*† An offering for sin, is, when the punishment of sin is transferred from the original offender to another, and that other person suffers in his stead. Thus the Lord Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. The punishment of our sin was transferred to him, and he bore it in his own body on the tree. He became our substitute, and took our place in law, and therefore, the penalty of the law due to us was executed upon him. It is in this, my brethren, that we have any hope of salvation; blood for blood, life for life, soul for soul: the blood, the life, the soul of the Son of God, for the blood and life, and soul, of the obnoxious criminal. Here, sirs, your grateful wonder may begin to rise upon our first entrance on this subject; and you will find the wonders will increase as we go along.

You see Jesus presented an offering for sin; and what was it he offered? "Silver and gold he had none," the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of heifers, would not suffice; and these too he had not. But he had blood in his veins, and that shall all go; that he will offer up to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made an offering for sin. *His soul an offering for sin!* his pure, spotless soul! his soul, that was of more value than the whole universe beside! You may find those that will give a great many things for the deliverance of a friend, but who will give his soul? his soul for his enemies!—This is the peculiar commendation of the love of Jesus.

His

* The particle here rendered *when*, is more generally rendered *if*; and then the sentence will read thus: "If thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," the consequence will be, that "he shall see his seed," &c.

† Or, "When thou shalt make his soul sin." It is a common scripture-phrase, whereby a sin-offering is called sin. And it is sometimes retained in our translation, particularly in 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin;" that is, a sin-offering for us, &c.

His soul here may signify his whole human nature; in which sense it is often taken in the sacred writings. And then the meaning is, that both his soul and body, or his whole human nature, bore the punishment due to us. Or his soul may be here understood properly for his rational and immortal part, in opposition to his body; and then the meaning is, that he suffered in soul as well as in body. His soul suffered by the foresight of his sufferings; by the temptations of the devil; by an affecting view of the sins of men; and especially by the absence of his heavenly Father. Hence, when his body was untouched, in the garden of Gethsemane, he cries out, *my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death;* and elsewhere, *now is my soul troubled.* In short, as one expresses it, the sufferings of his soul was the soul of his sufferings. The sense of bodily pain may be swallowed up in the pleasing sensations of divine love. So some have found by happy experience, who have suffered for righteousness-sake. But Jesus denied himself that happiness which he has given to many of his servants. His soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and all this for such sinners as we. And shall this have no weight among the creatures for whom he endured all this? Make an experiment upon your hard hearts with this thought, and try if they can resist its energy,—*Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.* Thou shalt make; that is, thou, the great God and Father of all. This sacrifice is provided by thy wisdom and grace, and appointed by thy authority, who hast a right to settle the terms of forgiveness; and therefore may be sure this sacrifice is acceptable; this atonement is sufficient. This method of salvation is thy contrivance and establishment, and therefore valid and firm. Here, my brethren, is a sure foundation; here, and nowhere else. Can you produce a divine warrant for depending on your own righteousness, or any thing else? No; but this offering for sin is of divine appointment, and therefore you

may ſafely venture your eternal all upon it. "Come, ye afflicted, toſſed with tempeſt, and not comforted;" come build upon this rock, and you ſhall never fall.

Or the words may be rendered, *When his ſoul ſhall make an offering for ſin.* * And in this ſenſe it is ſignified that this was Chriſt's own voluntary act. He conſented to the arduous undertaking: he conſented to be our ſubſtitute, and offered himſelf a ſacrifice for us. He was under no previous conſtraint; ſubject to no compulſion. This he tells us himſelf; *No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myſelf.* John x. 18. Thus it was his own free choice; and this conſideration prodigiouſly enhances his love. A forced favour is but a ſmall favour. But Jeſus willingly laid down his life when he had power to keep it. He voluntarily aſcended the croſs, when he might have ſtill continued on his throne. He was abſolute Lord and Proprietor of himſelf, under no obligations to any, till he aſſumed them by his own conſent. When martyrs have died in the cauſe of righteouſneſs, they did but what was their previous duty; their lives were not theirs, but his who gave them, his to whom they devoted them; and they had no right to them when he demanded them; nor were they able to protect them againſt the power of their enemies. But Jeſus reſigned what was his own abſolute property; and he reſigned his life when it was in his power to have retained it. All the united forces of earth and hell could not have touched his life, had not he conſented. As with one word he ſpoke them into being, ſo with a word he could have blaſted all their powers, or remanded them into nothing, as he found them. Of this he gave a ſpecimen, when by ſaying *I am he* (John xviii. 6.) I am the deſpiſed Nazarene whom

* The reaſon of this ambiguity is, that the original word is the ſecond perſon maſculine, and the third perſon feminine. If taken in the maſculine gender, it muſt be applied to God the Father; if in the feminine, to the ſoul of Chriſt; which is alſo feminine.

whom ye are seeking, he struck an armed company down to the earth, and he could as easily have chained them there, and never suffered them to rise more. Here was love indeed, that he should offer himself a voluntary self-devoted sacrifice! and if he made his soul an offering for sin when he was not obliged to it, will not you voluntarily love and serve him, when you are obliged to it; obliged by all the ties of authority and gratitude, of duty and interest? Let me bring home this overture to your hearts: will you of your own choice devote yourselves to his service, who consented to devote himself a victim for your sins? Are you willing to live to him, when you are bound to do it; to him who died for you, when he was not bound to do it? You have the easier task of the two: to live a life of holiness, and to die upon a cross, are very different things; and will you not do thus much for him? could there be such a thing as a work of supererogation, or an overplus of obedience, methinks this overplus of love might constrain you to it; and will you not so much as honestly attempt that which you are bound to by the most strong and endearing obligations? if you reject this proposal, make no pretensions to gratitude, a regard to the most sacred and rightful authority, or any noble disposition. You are sunk into the most sordid and aggravated degree of wickedness, and every generous and pious passion is extinct within you.

Now what shall be the consequence, what the reward of all these sufferings of Christ? Shall he endure all this in vain? Shall he receive no compensation? Yes: for,

2. My text tells you *he shall prolong his days.* The self-devoted victim shall have a glorious resurrection. His days were cut off in the midst; but he rose again, and shall enjoy an endless length of happy and glorious days. That he was once dead he was not ashamed to own, when he appeared in a form of so much majesty to John. *Fear not*, says he, *I am the first and the*

the laſt: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore. Rev. i. 17, 18. The man that hung on Calvary, and lay dead in the tomb of Joſeph of Arimathea, where is he now? O! he has burſt the bonds of death, triumphed over the grave, and enjoys an immortal life. And this immortal life he ſpends in a ſtation of the moſt exalted dignity and perfect happineſs for ever. See! Jeſus, *who was made a little lower than the angels, for the ſuffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.* Heb. ii. 9. Becauſe *he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, and every tongue confeſs.* Phil. ii. 8—11. It was for this end that *Chriſt both died and roſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* Rom. xiv. 9. By his death he acquired univerſal government, and has the keys of the vaſt inviſible world, and of death that leads into it. Rev. i. 18. This was a great part of that *joy which was ſet before him, for the ſake of which he endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame.* Heb. xii. 2. *

And is the poor, deſpiſed, inſulted, crucified Jeſus thus exalted? Then I proclaim, like the herald before Joſeph, when advanced to be prime miniſter to Pharaoh, Bow the knee! ſubmit to him, ye ſons of men. He has bought you with his blood, and has a right to your ſubjection; therefore yield yourſelves to him. This day become his willing ſubjects, and ſwear allegiance to him at his table. To him let every knee bow

* This ſentence, "he ſhall prolong his days," is otherwiſe tranſlated by ſome, and applied not to Chriſt, but to his ſeed: "He ſhall ſee his ſeed, who ſhall prolong their days;" or, "He ſhall ſee a long-lived ſeed," or "a long ſucceſſion of poſterity." *So the Seventy.*—This tranſlation gives a ſtricter connection and uniformity to the words with the preceding and following ſentences. And in this ſenſe it is undoubtedly true: for Jeſus has always had, and ever will have ſome ſpiritual children on our guilty globe; and neither earth nor hell ſhall ever be able to extinguiſh the ſacred race.

bow in this aſſembly, and every tongue confeſs that Jeſus is Lord. And do you now feel your hearts begin to yield? Are your ſouls in the poſture of humble homage? Are you ready to ſay 'Lord Jeſus, reign over this ſoul of mine: ſee, I reſign it as the willing captive of thy croſs.' Or will you ſtand it out againſt him? Shall your hearts and practices, as it were, ſend a meſſage after him, now when he is advanced to his heavenly throne, *We will not have this man to reign over us?* Then I proclaim you rebels, wilful inexcuſable rebels againſt the Supreme, the moſt rightful, and the moſt gracious government of Chriſt; and if you continue ſuch, you muſt periſh for ever by the ſword of his juſtice, without a poſſibility of eſcaping. You cannot rebel againſt the crucified Jeſus with impunity, for he is not now dying on the croſs, or lying ſenſeleſs in the grave. He lives! he lives to avenge the affront. He lives for ever to puniſh you for ever, He ſhall prolong his days to prolong your torment. Therefore you have no alternative, but to ſubmit to him, or periſh.

I may alſo propoſe the immortality and exaltation of Chriſt to you, as an encouragement to deſponding ſouls. So the apoſtle uſes it, *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth.* Heb. vii. 25. In truſting your ſouls to him, you do not commit them to a dead Saviour. It is true, he was once dead, above 1700 years ago; but now he is alive; and behold, he liveth for evermore. He lives to communicate his ſpirit for your ſanctification; he lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderneſs; he lives to ſend down ſupplies to you according to your exigencies; he lives to make perpetual interceſſion for you (which is the thing the apoſtle had in view) to plead your cauſe, to urge your claims founded on his blood, and to ſolicit bleſſings for you. He lives for ever to make you happy for ever. And will you not venture to truſt your ſouls in his hand? you may ſafely do it without fear.

fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the Supreme Being, Lord of all, and having all things subjected to him; and consequently, nothing can hurt you if he undertakes to be your guard. Ye trembling weaklings, would it not be better for you to fly to him for refuge than to stand on your own footing, afraid of falling every hour? He can, he will support you, if you lean upon him.

And does not he appear to you as an object of love in his exalted state? He is all-glorious, and deserves your love; and he is all benevolence and mercy, and therefore self-interest, one would think, would induce you to love him; for to what end is he exalted? Isaiah will tell you,—*He is exalted that he may have mercy upon you.* Isai. xxx. 18. He has placed himself upon his throne, as upon an eminence, may I so speak, that he may more advantageously scatter blessings among the needy crowd beneath him, that look up to him with eager, wishful eyes, like the lame beggar on Peter and John, expecting to receive something from him. And shall not such grace and bounty, in one so highly advanced above you, excite your love? Certainly it must, unless that the principle of gratitude be lost in your breasts.

Finally, May I not propose the exaltation and immortality of the Lord Jesus, as an object of congratulation to you that are his friends? Friends naturally rejoice in the honours conferred upon one another, and mutually congratulate each other's success. And will not you that love Jesus rejoice with him, that he is not now where he once was; not hanging on a painful and ignominous cross, but seated on a glorious throne; not insulted by the rabble, but adored by all the heavenly armies; not pierced with a crown of thorns, but adorned with a crown of unfading glory; not oppressed under loads of sufferings, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys! Must you not rejoice that his sufferings for you had so happy an issue with regard to himself? O! can you be

be sunk in sorrow while your head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain he endured for you! Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all his members; and if you have no reason to rejoice on your own account, yet rejoice for your head: share in the joys of your Lord.

Thus you see Jesus Christ has obtained the richest reward in his own person. But is this all? Shall his sufferings have no happy consequences with regard to others; in which he may rejoice as well as for himself? Yes; for,

3. My text tells you that *He shall see his seed. He shall see of the travail of his soul*, and shall be satisfied: and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. What an emphatical variety of expressions are here to signify the pleasure which Christ takes in observing the happy fruits of his death, in the salvation of many of the ruined sons of men!

He shall see his seed. By his seed are meant the children of his grace, his followers, the sincere professors of his religion. The disciples or followers of a noted person, for example, a prophet or philosopher, are not seldom denominated his seed or children.—These words are parallel to those spoken by himself, in the near prospect of his sufferings; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* John xii. 24. So unless Jesus had fallen to the ground and died, he would have abode alone; he would have possessed his native heaven in solitude, as to any of the sons of Adam: but now by his dying, and lying entombed in the ground, he has produced a large increase. One dying Christ has produced thousands, millions of Christians. His blood was prolific; it was indeed "the seed of the church." * And, blessed be God, its prolific virtue is

* It was a proverb in the primitive times, that "The blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church;" but never could it be applied with so much propriety as to the blood of Christ.

is not yet failed. His ſpiritual ſeed have been growing up from age to age; and O the delightful thought! they have ſprung up in this barren ſoil, though alas! they too often appear thin and withering. Theſe tender plants of righteouſneſs have ſprung up in ſome of your families; and I truſt, a goodly number of them are here in the courts of the Lord to-day. If you ſearch after the root, you will find it riſes from the blood of Jeſus; and it is his blood that gives it nouriſhment. Jeſus came into our world, and ſhed the blood of his heart on the ground, that it might produce a crop of ſouls for the harveſt of eternal glory: and without this, we could no more expect it than wheat without ſeed or moiſture. A part of this ſeed is now ripened and gathered into the granary of heaven, *like a ſhock of corn come in in his ſeaſon.* Another part is ſtill in this unfriendly climate, ſuffering the extremities of winter, covered with ſnow, nipt with froſt, languiſhing in drought, and trodden under foot. Such are you, the plants of righteouſneſs, that now hear me. But you are ripening apace, and your harveſt is juſt at hand. Therefore bear up under the ſeverities of winter; for that coldneſs of heart, that drought for want of divine influences, thoſe ſtorms of temptation, and thoſe oppreſſions that now tread you down, will ere long be over. O! when ſhall we ſee this heavenly ſeed ſpring up in this place, in a more extenſive and promiſing degree? When you travel through the country, in this temperate ſeaſon, with which God has bleſſed our country that was parched and languiſhing laſt year, how agreeable is the ſurvey of wide extenſive fields, promiſing plenteous crops of various kinds! And O! ſhall we not have a fruitful ſeaſon of ſpiritual ſeed among us! May I accommodate the words of Jeſus to this aſſembly, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harveſt!* John iv. 35. O! is the happy ſeaſon come, when we ſhall ſee a large crop of converts in this place! Then welcome thou long-

long-expected season! But alas! is not this a flattering hope? is it not, on the other hand, a barren season with us? is not the harvest past and the summer over, while so many are not saved? O! the melancholy thought! If it has been so with us for some time, O let us endeavour to make this a fruitful day!

We may perhaps more naturally understand this metaphor as taken, not from the seed of vegetables, but from that of man; and so it signifies a posterity, which is often called Seed. This only gives us another view of the same case. Spiritual children are rising up to Christ from age to age, from country to country: and blessed be his name, the succession is not yet at an end, but will run on as long as the sun endureth. Spiritual children are daily begotten by his word in one part of the world or other; and even of this place it may be said, "that this and that man was born here." And are there none among you now that feel the pangs of the new birth, and about to be added to the number of his children? O that many may be born to him this day! O that this day we may feel the prolific virtue of that blood which was shed above 1700 years ago!

He shall see his seed. It is a comfort to a dying man to see a numerous offspring to keep up his name, and inherit his estate. This comfort Jesus had in all the calamities of his life, and in all the agonies of death; and this animated him to endure all with patience. He saw some of his spiritual children weeping around him while hanging on the cross. He looked forward to the end of time, and saw a numerous offspring rising up from age to age to call him blessed, to bear up his name in the world, and to share in his heavenly inheritance. And O! may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that from his cross he cast a look towards Hanover in the ends of the earth; and that in his last agonies he was revived with this reflection, 'I see I shall not die in vain: I see my seed dispersed over the world, and reaching the wilds of

America. I foreſee that a number of them, towards the end of the world, will meet in Hanover, gratefully to commemorate the ſufferings I am now enduring, and devote themſelves to me for ever.' O! my brethren, will you not afford the bleſſed Jeſus this pleaſure? it is but little, very little, for all the tortures he bore for you: your ſins has given him many a wound, many a pang, and will you not now grant him this ſatisfaction? But the croſs is not the only place from whence he takes a view of his ſpiritual ſeed. He is now exalted to his throne in the higheſt heavens; and from thence he takes a wide ſurvey of the univerſe. He looks down upon our world: he beholds kings in their grandeur, victorious generals with all their power, nobles and great men in all their pomp; but theſe are not the objects that beſt pleaſe his eyes. "He ſees his ſeed," he ſees one here, and another there, bought with his blood, and born of his ſpirit; and this is the moſt delightful ſight our world can afford him. Some of them may be oppreſſed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghaſtly with famine: they may make no great figure in mortal eyes; but he loves to look at them, he eſteems them as his children, and the fruits of his dying pangs. And let me tell you, his eyes are upon this aſſembly to-day; and if there be one of his ſpiritual ſeed among us, he can diſtinguiſh him in the crowd. He ſees you drinking in his words with eager ears; he ſees you at his table commemorating his love; he ſees your hearts breaking with penitential ſorrows, and melting at his croſs. And O! ſhould we not all be ſolicitous that we be of that happy number on whom his eyes are thus graciouſly fixed!

But theſe are not the only children whom he delights to view; they are not all in ſuch an abject, imperfect ſtate. No, he ſees a glorious company of them around his throne in heaven, arrived to maturity, enjoying their inheritance, and reſembling their divine Parent. How does his benevolent heart rejoice

to

to look over the immense plains of heaven, and see them all peopled with his seed! When he takes a view of this numerous, offspring, sprung from his blood, and when he looks down to our world, and we hope, to this place among others, and sees so many infants in grace, gradually advancing to their adult age; when he sees some, perhaps every hour since he died upon Calvary, entering the gates of heaven, having finished their course of education upon earth; I say when this prospect appears to him on every hand, how does he rejoice! Now the prophecy in my text is fulfilled, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* If you put the sentiments of his benevolent heart into language, methinks it is to this purpose, 'It is enough; since my death has been so fruitful of such a glorious posterity, I am satisfied. If sinners will submit to me, that I may save them, if they will but suffer me to make them happy, I desire no other reward for all my agonies for them. If this end be but answered, I do not at all repent of my hanging on the tree for them.' O sirs, must not your hearts melt away within you, to hear such language as this? See the strength of the love of Jesus! if you be but saved, he does not grudge his blood and life for you. Your salvation would make amends for all. He asks no other reward from you than that you will become his spiritual seed, and behave as children towards him. This he would count the greatest joy; a joy more than equivalent to all the pains he endured for you. And, O! my brethern, will you not afford him this joy to-day? This is a point I have much at heart, and therefore I must urge it upon you; nay, I can take no denial in it. Jesus has done and suffered a great deal for you; and has gratitude never constrained you to enquire how you can oblige him? or what you shall do for him in return? If this be your enquiry, you have an answer immediately: devote yourselves to his service, love and obey him as his dutiful children,

children, that he may ſave you. If you would oblige him, if you would give him full ſatisfaction for all the ſorrows you have cauſed him, do this; do this or nothing; for nothing elſe can pleaſe him. Suppoſe he ſhould this day appear to you in that form in which he once was ſeen by mortals, ſweating great drops of blood, accuſed, inſulted, bruiſed, ſcourged, racked upon the croſs; and ſuppoſe he ſhould turn to you with a countenance full of love and pity, and drenched with blood and tears, and addreſs you in ſuch moving language as this; 'See! ſinners, ſee what I ſuffer for you; ſee at what a dear rate I purchaſe your life; ſee how I love you. And now I have only this to aſk of you in return, that you would forſake thoſe murderous ſins which thus torment me; that you would love and ſerve me; and accept of that ſalvation which I am now purchaſing for you with the blood of my heart; this I aſk with all the importunity of my laſt breath, of bleeding wounds, and expiring groans. Grant me but this, and I am ſatisfied; I ſhall think all my ſufferings well beſtowed.' I ſay, ſuppoſe he ſhould addreſs you thus in perſon, what anſwer would he recieve from this aſſembly? O! would you not all cry out with one voice, 'Lord Jeſus, thou haſt overcome us with thy love; here we conſent to thy requeſt. Preſcribe any thing, and we will obey. Nothing can be a ſufficient compenſation for ſuch dying love.'—Well, my brethren, though Jeſus be not here in perſon, yet he makes the ſame requeſt to you by the preaching of the goſpel, he makes the ſame requeſt by the ſignificant repreſentation of his ſufferings, juſt about to be given by ſacramental ſigns; and therefore make the ſame anſwer now, which you would to himſelf in perſon. He has had much grief from Hanover ere now; many ſins committed here lay heavy upon him, and bruiſed and wounded him: and O! will you not afford him joy this day? Will you not give him the ſatisfaction he deſires? His eyes are now running through this

this aſſembly, and ſhall he not ſee of the travail of his ſoul? Shall he not ſee the happy fruits of his death? there is joy in heaven at the converſion of one ſinner, and Jeſus has a principal ſhare in the joy. And will you endeavour to rob him of it? If you reject his propoſal, the language of your conduct is, 'He ſhall have no cauſe of joy, as far as I can hinder it; he ſhall however have none from me: all his ſufferings ſhall be in vain, as far as I can render them ſo.' And are you not ſhocked at ſuch blaſphemy and baſe ingratitude? The happineſs of his exalted ſtate conſiſts in a great degree in the pleaſure of ſeeing the deſigns of his death accompliſhed in the converſion and ſalvation of ſinners; and therefore by denying him this you attempt to degrade him, to rob him of his happineſs, and to make him once more a man of ſorrows. And can you venture upon ſuch impiety and ingratitude? I tell you, ſirs, it will not do for you to profeſs his name, to compliment him with the formalities of religion, and to be Chriſtians in pretence, while you do not depart from iniquity, and while your hearts are not fired with his love. He takes no pleaſure in ſeeing ſuch ſpurious ſeed, that have no reſemblance to their pretended Father; but he will diſown them at laſt as he did the Jews, and tell them, *Ye are of your father the devil, whoſe works ye do.* John viii. 44.—The thing in which he would rejoice, and which I am inculcating upon you, is, that as penitent helpleſs ſinners you would caſt yourſelves entirely upon the merit of his atonement, devote yourſelves to his ſervice, and ſubmit to him as your Lord; that is, that you would become true, genuine, ſincere chriſtians. This, and nothing ſhort of this, would afford him pleaſure; and can you refuſe it to him; eſpecially when it will afford the greateſt pleaſure to yourſelves? Permit me, my dear brethren, to inſiſt upon it, that you rejoice the heart of the bleſſed Jeſus to-day. I requeſt you in his name and ſtead; and to which of you ſhall I make the requeſt

queſt with ſucceſs? Will you, the freeborn deſcendants of Britons, gratify him in this? Or if you refuſe, behold I turn to the Gentiles. Some of you, poor negroes, have, I hope, rejoiced the heart of Chriſt, by ſubmitting to him as your Saviour; and are there no more among you that will do him this kindneſs? O! can any of you bear the thought of refuſing? He bore the black crimes of many a poor negroe; and now he is looking upon you to ſee what return you will make him. Come then, ye that are at once ſlaves to men and ſlaves to ſin, let *the Son make you free, and you ſhall be free indeed:* he will deliver you from ſin and Satan, the worſt of maſters, and bring you into the glorious liberty of his children.

Here I would for a while drop my addreſs to the noble principle of gratitude, and endeavour to work upon that of ſelf-love, which, though leſs noble, is more ſtrong in degenerate creatures. In affording Chriſt this pleaſure, you will afford the greateſt pleaſure to yourſelves; for it is your happineſs, your ſalvation that he rejoices in, and therefore in grieving him you ruin yourſelves. Accept of him as your Saviour and Lord, and you ſhall be happy for ever; but if you reject him, you are for ever undone: he will not ſave you, and where will you look for a Saviour? To which of the ſaints, to which of the angels will you turn? Alas! they all will caſt you off if Chriſt renounces you. If you will not ſuffer him to rejoice over you in doing you good, he will rejoice over you in doing you evil: he will glorify himſelf in your deſtruction: he will pleaſe himſelf in the execution of juſtice upon you. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright to reflect the ſplendors of his perfections. But, on the other hand, if you afford him joy at your converſion this day, he will reward you for ever; he will reward you with all the unſpeakable joys of heaven.

Here then is a twofold cord to draw you to Jeſus Chriſt, the love of Chriſt and the love of yourſelves; and

and one would think ſuch a cord could not eaſily be broken. Can any of you reſiſt the united force of gratitude and ſelf-intereſt? Are you ſo unnatural as to ſin againſt Chriſt, and againſt your own life; to ruin yourſelves rather than oblige him? Who would think that the once noble nature of man ſhould ever be capable of ſuch a degree of degeneracy? And O! who would have thought that the Son of God would lay down his life, or even entertain one benevolent thought for ſuch baſe ungrateful creatures that care ſo little for him, or even for their own true intereſt? I muſt bring this matter to a ſhort iſſue; and it is this; you muſt either afford Chriſt this generous pleaſure, by receiving and ſubmitting to him this day, or you will return home under the additional guilt of rejecting him, and doing all you could to reduce him into miſery again; and if you continue ſuch, which alas! is not improbable, you muſt feel his eternal reſentments, and periſh for ever under the weight of his righteous vengeance. Let us now proceed to another part of the text.

The pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. It is the pleaſure of the Lord that ſinners ſhould be ſaved through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt; I ſay, through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt; for he is determined they ſhall not be ſaved in any other way; he is determined that thoſe who refuſe to be ſaved in this way, ſhall not be ſaved at all; becauſe their ſalvation in any other way would not be conſiſtent with the glory of his perfections, the honour of his government, and his character as the ſupreme Magiſtrate of the univerſe; and his honour and glory are of more importance than the happineſs of all created worlds; and therefore their happineſs cannot be obtained in any way inconſiſtent with it. But through the mediation of Chriſt ſinners may be ſaved, and in the mean time the honour of the divine perfections and government ſecured, and even illuſtrated. He has made atonement for ſin, and anſwered the demands

mands of the divine law and juſtice; ſo that God can now be juſt, and yet juſtify him that believeth in Jeſus. Hence *God is in Chriſt;* obſerve in Chriſt, *reconciling the world to himſelf.* 2 Cor. v. 19. His heart is ſet on it; and the ſucceſs of this ſcheme affords him the greateſt pleaſure. It is not only your intereſt, but your duty to be ſaved. It is as much your duty to enter into heaven as to pray, or to perform any other part of religion. And your deſtruction will not only be your righteous puniſhment, but your ſin; the moſt criminal ſelf-murder. God has been pleaſed to interpoſe his authority, to give greater force to the principle of ſelf-love. Your intereſt has this additional recommendation, that it is your duty; and you ſin againſt God in ruining yourſelves. Here again my ſubject leads me to addreſs myſelf to the united principles of gratitude and ſelf-love. Will you not afford the Lord that made you this benevolent pleaſure? Will you not gratify him in this, when it is your happineſs he ſeeks? Has neither the pleaſure of God nor your own immortal intereſt any weight with you? Is ſin dearer to you than both? Alas! if you are not to be wrought upon by conſiderations drawn from the love of God, or love to yourſelves, from gratitude of ſelf-intereſt, from what topic ſhall I reaſon with you? If this be the caſe, you are no longer to be dealt with as reaſonable creatures, but as natural brute-beaſts, made to be taken and deſtroyed.

This work of ſaving ſinners, God has entruſted to Jeſus Chriſt; and he has choſen a very proper perſon for ſo grand and difficult an undertaking. *The pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand,* or under his management. He knows how to carry on the ſcheme to the beſt advantage. The work has been going on from Adam to this day, in ſpite of all oppoſition; and it is not now at a ſtand. O that it may proſper among you, my dear people! O that the ſacred Trinity, and all the angels on high, may look down with pleaſure this day on this guilty ſpot, rejoicing to ſee the grand

grand ſcheme of ſalvation ſucceſsfully going on! My brethren, will you not fall in with the deſign? A deſign ſo favourable to yourſelves. Will you not all concur to promote it, and carry it into execution upon a child, a friend, a neighbour, and eſpecially upon yourſelves? Or will you ſet yourſelves againſt the Lord, and againſt his Anointed, by refuſing to fall in with this ſcheme? Will you join in the conſpiracy againſt it with the malevolent powers of hell, who oppoſe it with all their might, becauſe it tends to your ſalvation? You readily concur in any ſcheme for your temporal advantage, and why not in this? Is the happineſs of heaven the only kind of happineſs that you are careleſs about? Is the ſalvation of your immortal ſoul the only deliverance for which you have no deſire? Alas! are you become ſo ſtupidly wicked?

This ſubject affords ſtrong conſolation to ſuch of you as have complied with the method of ſalvation through Chriſt, ſince the ſalvation of ſinners in this way is the pleaſure of the Lord; and ſince it is entruſted to the faithful and ſkilful hands of Chriſt, under whoſe management it will proſper, you may be ſure his pleaſure will be accompliſhed with reſpect to you, and that the divine ſcheme ſhall be carried into complete execution, in ſpite of all oppoſition. Therefore rejoice in your ſecurity, and bleſs his name to whom you owe it.

I ſhall conclude with a few advices adapted to this ſolemn ſacramental occaſion.

The table of the Lord is juſt about to be ſpread among us. This is another inſtance of the grace and benevolence of Chriſt; for to remember him, who is the deſign of this ordinance, is not only your duty, but your privilege and happineſs. The remembrance of him has virtue in it to refreſh your ſouls, to heal your wounded conſciences, and to revive your languiſhing graces. Hence it is that this ordinance is not only a memorial of Chriſt, but a feaſt for your

refreſhment and ſupport; and conſequently his making it a ſtanding ordinance in his church is a ſtanding evidence of his good-will to his people to the end of the world. It is true it is an inſtitution little regarded, even in the chriſtian world: to many the table of the Lord is contemptible, or they ſtand by and gaze at it as unconcerned, or curious ſpectators. But this does not depreciate it, nor is it a reaſon why you ſhould deſert it. Come, ye children, crowd round your Father's table to-day. Let Jeſus ſee his ſeed feaſting together in commemoration of him, and in mutual love with one another. Let him now ſee of the travail of his ſoul, the children with whom he travailed as in birth; let him now ſee a goodly company of them around his table, that he may be ſatisfied. Let me remind you that you have cauſed him many an heavy hour, and much pain and ſorrow; therefore let him in return have pleaſure and ſatisfaction from you this day. O! rejoice the heart you have often broken, and let there be joy in heaven over you. Let the angels that are miniſtering to the ſaints, and that are no doubt hovering unſeen over this aſſembly, viewing thoſe humble memorials of that Saviour whom they behold without a veil in his native heaven, let them carry up glad tidings to their Lord this evening, and tune their harps above to higher ſtrains of joy and praiſe. And O! that the loſt ſheep would this day return, that their kind Shepherd may rejoice over them: he came from heaven in ſearch of you, and will you keep out of his way, and fear falling into his hands? Let wandering prodigals return, that there may be joy in your Father's houſe, whoſe arms are ſtretched out to embrace you, and who is looking after you with eager eyes. O let the pleaſure of the Lord proſper among us this day, and it will be a day gratefully to be remembered to all eternity.

This ordinance is alſo a ſeal of the covenant of grace; therefore come to it this day to renew your

contract

contract with your God and Saviour; to take him for your God, and to give up yourſelves to him as his people, in an everlaſting covenant never to be forgotten. Make a ſure covenant; call heaven and earth, God, angels, and men to be witneſs to it and ſeal it with the memorials of your dying Redeemer. You had need to make it firm, for much depends upon it; and you have much to go through to perform the duties of the Chriſtian life; to conflict with powerful temptations; to die; to ſtand at the ſupreme tribunal; theſe are the things you are to go through; and you cannot paſs through them with honour or ſafety, unleſs you make ſure of an intereſt in God, and give up your all into his hands.

This inſtitution is alſo intended to cultivate the communion of the ſaints; and therefore, as children, you are to ſit down at the table of your common Father, with hearts full of ardent love to mankind, and eſpecially to the houſhold of faith. Let no angry or malicious paſſion pollute this ſacred feaſt; but be all charity and benevolence, like that Redeemer whoſe death you celebrate.

Finally, You are now to renew your vows and obligations to be the Lord's, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life. See that you enter into them with an entire dependance upon his ſtrength: and O! remember them afterwards, to carry them into execution. One would think that all traitors would be for ever deterred from ſitting down at the Lord's table, by the ſhocking example of Judas, the firſt hypocrite that profaned it. And O! one would think that vows, made in ſo ſolemn a poſture, and with the emblems of Chriſt's body and blood in your hands, would not ſoon be forgotten as trifles. It is, methinks, as an exploit of wickedneſs to be capable of this; and none of you, I hope, are hardy enough to venture upon it.

SERMON

SERMON XXVII.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

2 TIM. i. 10. *And hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* *

SO extenſive have been the havock and devaſtation which death has made in the world for near ſix thouſand years, ever ſince it was firſt introduced by the ſin of man, that this earth is now become one vaſt grave-yard, or burying-place for her ſons. The many generations that have followed upon each other, in ſo quick a ſucceſſion from Adam to this day, are now in the manſions under ground. And there muſt we and all the preſent generation ſleep ere long. Some make a ſhort journey from the womb to the grave: they riſe from nothing at the creative fiat of the Almighty, and take an immediate flight into the world of ſpirits, without an intermediate ſtate of probation. Like a bird on the wing, they perch on our globe, reſt a day, a month, or a year, and then fly off for ſome other regions. It is evident, theſe were not formed for the purpoſes of the preſent ſtate, where they make ſo ſhort a ſtay; and yet we are ſure they are not made in vain by an all-wiſe Creator; and therefore we conclude they are young immortals, that immediately ripen in the world of ſpirits, and there enter upon ſcenes, for which it was worth their while coming into exiſtence. Others ſpring up and bloom for a few years; but they fade away like a flower, and are cut down. Others arrive at the prime or meridian of human life; but in all their ſtrength and

* This Sermon was preached at the Funeral of Mr. William Yuille, and is dated Sept. 1, 1756.

and gaiety, and amid their hurries and schemes, and promising prospects, they are surprized by the arrest of death, and laid stiff, senseless, and ghastly in the grave. A few creep into their beds of dust under the burden of old age and the gradual decays of nature. In short, the grave is *the place appointed for all living;* the general rendezvous of all the sons of Adam. There the prince and the beggar, the conqueror and the slave, the giant and the infant, the scheming politician and the simple peasant, the wise and the fool, Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians, all lie equally low, and mingle their dust without distinction. There beauty in all its charms putrifies into stench and corruption, and feeds the vilest insects. There the sturdy arm of youth lies torpid and benumbed, unable to drive off the worms that crawl through their frame, and riot upon their marrow. There lie our ancestors, our neighbours, our friends, our relatives, with whom we once conversed, and who were united to our hearts by strong and endearing ties; and there lies our friend, the sprightly, vigorous youth, whose death is the occasion of this funeral solemnity. This earth is over-spread with the ruins of the human frame: it is an huge carnage, a vast charnel-house, undermined and hollowed with the graves, the last mansions of mortals.

And shall these ruins of time and death never be repaired? Is this the final state of human nature? Are all these millions of creatures, that were so curiously formed, that could think, and will, and exercise the superior powers of reason, are they all utterly extinct, absorbed into the yawning gulph of annihilation, and never again to emerge into life and activity? If this be the case, the expostulation of the psalmist upon this supposition, seems unavoidable; *Lord, wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Psalm lxxxix. 47. It was not worth while to come into being, if it must be resigned so soon. The powers of

of reaſon were thrown away upon us, they were given only for the low purpoſes of the preſent life.

But my text revives us with heavenly light to ſcatter this tremendous gloom. Jeſus hath aboliſhed death, overthrown its empire, and delivered its captives; and he *hath brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel.*

Life and immortality here ſeem to refer both to the ſoul and the body, the two conſtituents of our perſon. As applied to the body, life and immortality ſignify, that though our bodies are diſſolved at death, and return into their native elements, yet they ſhall be formed anew with vaſt improvements, and raiſed to an immortal exiſtence; ſo that they ſhall be as though death never had *had* any power over them; and thus death ſhall be aboliſhed, annihilated, and all traces of the ruins it had made for ever diſappear, as though they had never been. It is in this ſenſe chiefly that the word *Immortality*, or *Incorruptibility*, * is made uſe of in my text. But then the reſurrection of the body ſuppoſes the perpetual exiſtence of the ſoul, for whoſe ſake it is raiſed: therefore life and immortality, as referring to the ſoul, ſignify that it is immortal, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe; that is, that it cannot die at all, or be diſſolved like the body; but it lives in the agonies of the dying animal; it lives after the diſſolution of the animal frame in a ſeparate ſtate; it lives at the reſurrection to re-animate the new-formed body; and it lives for ever, like its immortal Parent, and ſhall never be diſſolved nor annihilated. In this complex ſenſe we may underſtand the immortality of which my text ſpeaks.

Now it is to the goſpel that we owe the clear diſcovery of immortality in both theſe ſenſes. As for the reſurrection of the dead, which confers a kind of immortality upon our immortal bodies, it is altogether the diſcovery of divine revelation. The light of

* *aphtharſia.*

of nature could not so much as give a hint of it to the most sagacious philosophers in the heathen world. They did not hope for it as possible, much less believe it as certain. And when, among other important doctrines of pure revelation, it was first preached to them by St. Paul, their pride could not bear the mortification of being taught by a tent-maker what all their studies had not been able to discover; and therefore rejected it with scorn, and ridiculed it as a new-fangled notion of the superstitious Jews. This seems to have been an entire secret to all nations (except the Jews) till the light of Christianity dawned upon the world. They bade an eternal farewell to their bodies, when they dropped them in the grave. They never expected to meet them again in all the glorious improvements of an happy resurrection. But that divine revelation from whence we learn our religion, opens to us a brighter prospect; it strengthens our eyes to look forwards thro' the glooms of death, and behold the many that sleep in the dust awaking; *some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* Dan. xii. 2. It assures us, *that the hour is coming, when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.* John. v. 28. Therefore, be it known unto thee, O Death, thou king of terrors, that though we cannot now resist thy power nor escape thy arrest, yet we do not surrender ourselves to thee as helpless, irredeemable prisoners. We shall yet burst thy bonds, and obtain the victory over thee. And when we commit the dust of our friends or our own to thee, O grave, know, it is a trust deposited in thy custody, to be faithfully kept till called for by Him who was once a prisoner in thy territories, but regained his liberty, and triumphed over thee, and put that song of victory into the mouths of all his followers, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

As

As for the immortality of the ſoul, chriſtian philoſophers find it no difficulty to eſtabliſh it upon the plain principles of reaſon. Their arguments are ſuch as theſe; and I think they are concluſive: That the ſoul is an immaterial ſubſtance, and therefore cannot periſh by diſſolution, like the body; that the ſoul is a ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, and therefore the diſſolution of the body has no more tendency to deſtroy the ſoul, than the breaking of a cage to deſtroy the bird encloſed in it; that God has implanted in the ſoul the innate deſire of immortality; and that as the tendencies of nature in other inſtances and in other creatures are not in vain, this innate deſire is an indication that he intended it for an immortal duration; that as God is the moral Governor of the rational world, there muſt be rewards and puniſhments, and therefore there muſt be a future ſtate of retribution; for we ſee mankind are now under a promiſcuous providence, and generally are not dealt with according to their works; and if there be a future ſtate of retribution, the ſoul muſt live in a future ſtate, otherwiſe it could not be the ſubject of rewards and puniſhments. Theſe and the like topics of argument have been improved by the friends of immortality, to prove that important doctrine beyond all reaſonable ſuſpicion. And becauſe theſe arguments from reaſon ſeem ſufficient, ſome would conclude that we are not at all obliged to the chriſtian revelation in this reſpect. But it ſhould be conſidered that thoſe are not the arguments of the populace, the bulk of mankind, but of a few philoſophic ſtudious men. But as immortality is the prerogative of all mankind, of the ignorant and illiterate, as well as of the wiſe and learned, all mankind, of all ranks of underſtanding, are equally concerned in the doctrine of immortality; and therefore a common revelation was neceſſary, which would teach the ploughman and the mechanic, as well as the philoſopher, that he was formed for an immortal exiſtence, and conſequently that

that it is his grand concern to fit himself for a happiness beyond the grave, as lasting as his nature. Now, it is the gospel alone that makes this important discovery plain and obvious to all. It must also be considered, that men may be able to demonstrate a truth when the hint is but once given, which they would never have discovered, nor perhaps suspected, without that hint. So when *the gospel of Christ has brought immortality to light*, our christian philosophers may support it with arguments from reason; but had they been destitute of this additional light, they would have been lost in perplexity and uncertainty, or at best have been advanced to no further than plausible or probable conjectures. Persons may be assisted in their searches by the light of revelation; but, being accustomed to it, they may mistake it for the light of their own reason; or they may not be so honest and humble as to acknowledge the assistance they have received. The surest way to know what mere unassisted reason can do, is to inquire what it has actually done in those sages of the heathen world who had no other guide, and in whom it was carried to the highest degree of improvement. Now we find, in fact, that though some philosophers had plausibilities and presumptions that their souls should exist after the dissolution of their bodies, yet that they rather supposed, or wished, or thought it probable, than firmly believed it upon good evidence. The Socrateses, the Platos, and the Ciceros, of Greece and Rome, after all their searches, were more perplexed on this point, than a plain common christian of the smallest intellectual improvements in our land of evangelical light. Whoever reads their writings upon this subject will find, when they draw the conclusion of the soul's existence after death, it is often from extravagant and chimerical premises; such as the pre-existence of human souls, their successive transmigration from body to body, their being literally particles of the Deity, whom they supposed to be the

Anima Mundi, the univerſal ſoul of the world, &c. All theſe premiſes want the ſupport of proper evidence; and ſome of them are directly ſubverſive of the proper notion of a future ſtate, as a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. Sometimes indeed they ſeem to reaſon from better principles; but then they ſtill heſitate about the concluſion, and fluctuate between the preſumptions for it and the objections againſt it. Socrates was confeſſedly the brighteſt character in the heathen world, and ſeemed to have the faireſt claim of any among them to the honour of a martyr for the cauſe of truth and virtue; and yet even he, when making his defence before his Judges, ſpeaks in the language of uncertainty and perplexity. 'Death,' ſays he, 'either reduces us to nothing, and entirely deſtroys all ſenſe and conſciouſneſs; or, as ſome ſay, it conveys us from this world into ſome other region.' Thus, ſtanding on the brink of eternity, he was not aſſured whether he was not about to leap into the hideous gulph of annihilation, or to paſs into ſome vital region replete with inhabitants. When he was condemned, his laſt words to the court were theſe: 'It is time for us to part; I, that I may ſuffer death; and you, that you may enjoy life: but which of us has the happier lot, is known only to God.' Poor honeſt Socrates! how happy hadſt thou been, hadſt thou but enjoyed one glimmering of that heavenly light which multitudes among us deſpiſe! My brethren, let us be thankful for our ſuperior advantages, and let us prize and improve that precious goſpel, which gives us full information in this important point, and renders the meaneſt chriſtian wiſer in this reſpect than Socrates himſelf.

My preſent deſign is not to propoſe arguments for the conviction of your judgments, which I hope you do not ſo much need; but I ſhall give you ſome idea of immortality, in both the ſenſes I have mentioned, and then improve it.

Let us firſt look through the waſtes and glooms of

of death and the grave to the glorious dreadful morning of the resurrection. At the all-alarming clangor of the last trumpet, Adam, and the sleeping millions of his posterity start into sudden life. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28.

Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be organized, and re-animated; and *though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God.* Job xix. 26. *Then this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

And may not the prospect alarm us, and set us upon earnest preparation for these important scenes? Shall we take so much care of our bodies in this mortal state, where, after all our care, they must soon fall to dust, and become the prey of worms, and shall we take no care that they may have a happy and glorious resurrection! What does it signify how they are fed or dressed, while they are only fattening for worms, and the ornaments of dress may be our winding-sheet? What does this signify, in comparison with their doom at the great rising day, and their state through eternity? My brethren, you must not let *sin reign in your mortal bodies now, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof*, if you would have them raised holy and happy in that awful morning; but you must consecrate your bodies, and keep them holy as the temples of the Holy Ghost; and *yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Can you flatter yourselves that bodies polluted with filthy lusts and sensual gratifications shall ever be admitted into the regions of perfect purity? It would be an unnatural element to such depraved constitutions. Shall those feet ever walk the crystal pavement of the New Jerusalem, which have been accustomed to run into the foul paths of sin? Shall those tongues ever join the songs of heaven, which have been oftener employed in

in ſwearing and imprecation, the language of hell, than in prayer and praiſe? Shall thoſe ears ever be charmed with celeſtial muſic, which have not liſtened with pleaſure and eagerneſs to the joyful ſound of the goſpel, but were entertained with the ſong of drunkards, the loud unthinking laugh, and the impure jeſt? Are thoſe knees likely to bow in delightful homage before the throne of God and the Lamb on high, which have not been uſed to the poſture of petitioners at the throne of grace on earth? Are thoſe members likely to be the inſtruments of an heavenly ſpirit, in the exerciſes of that bleſſed ſtate, which have not been "inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto holineſs" in this ſtate of trial and diſcipline? No, my brethren, this is not at all probable, even to a ſuperficial inquirer; and to one that thinks deeply, and conſults right reaſon and the ſacred ſcriptures, this appears utterly impoſſible. Therefore take warning in time. Methinks this conſideration might have ſome weight, even with epicures and ſenſualiſts, who conſider themſelves as mere animals, and make it their only concern to provide for and gratify the fleſh. Unleſs you be religious now, unleſs you now deny yourſelves of your guilty pleaſures, not only your ſoul, that neglected diſregarded trifle, muſt periſh; but your body, your dear body, your only care, muſt be wretched too; your body muſt be hungry, thirſty, pained, tortured, hideouſly deformed, a mere ſyſtem of pain and loathſomeneſs. But if you now keep your bodies pure, and ſerve God with them, and with your ſpirits too, they will bloom for ever in the charms of celeſtial beauty; they will flouriſh in immortal youth and vigour! they will for ever be the receptacles of the moſt exquiſite ſenſations of pleaſure. And will you not deny yourſelves the ſordid pleaſures of a few years, for the ſake of thoſe of a bleſſed immortality?

But let me give you a view of immortality of a more noble kind, the proper immortality of the ſoul. And

And here, what an extensive and illustrious prospect opens before us! look a little way backward, and your sight is lost in the darkness of non-existence. A few years ago you were nothing. But at the creative fiat of the Almighty, that little spark of being, the soul, was struck out of nothing; and now it warms your breast, and animates the machine of flesh. But shall this glimmering spark, this *divinæ particula auræ*, ever be extinguished? No; it will survive the ruins of the universe, and blaze out into immortality: it will be coeval with the angels, the natives of heaven, and the *Indigenæ*, the original inhabitants of the world of spirits; nay with the great Father of spirits himself. The duration of your souls will run on from its first commencement, in parallel lines with the existence of the Deity. What an inheritance is this entailed upon the child of dust, the creature of yesterday! Here let us pause,—make a stand,—and take a survey of this majestic prospect! This body must soon moulder into dust, but the soul will live unhurt, untouched, amid all the dissolving struggles and convulsions of animal nature. *These heavens shall pass away with a great noise; these elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up;* 2 Peter iii. 10. but this soul shall live secure of existence in the universal desolation;

> "Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
> "The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds."

And now, when the present system of things is dissolved, and Time shall be no more, Eternity, boundless eternity, succeeds; and on this the soul enters as on its proper hereditary duration. Now look forward as far as you will, your eyes meets with no obstruction, with nothing but the immensity of the prospect: in that, indeed, it is lost, as extending infinitely beyond its ken. Come, attempt this arithmetic of infinits, and exhaust the power of numbers: let millions of millions of ages begin the vast computation; multiply these by the stars of heaven; by the particles

particles of duſt in this huge globe of earth; by the drops of water in all the vaſt oceans, rivers, lakes, and ſprings that are ſpread over the globe; by all the thoughts that have riſen in ſo quick a ſucceſſion in the minds of men and angels, from their firſt creation to this day; make this computation, and then look forward through this long line of duration, and contemplate your future ſelves: ſtill you ſee yourſelves in exiſtence; ſtill the ſame perſons; ſtill endowed with the ſame conſciouſneſs, and the ſame capacities for happineſs or miſery, but vaſtly enlarged; as much ſuperior to the preſent as the capacities of an adult to thoſe of a new-born infant, or an embryo in the womb. Still will you bloom in immortal youth, and are as far from an end as in the firſt moment of your exiſtence. O ſirs, methinks it may ſtartle us to view our future ſelves ſo changed, ſo improved, removed into ſuch different regions, aſſociated with ſuch ſtrange unacquainted beings, and fixt in ſuch different circumſtances of glory or terror, of happineſs or miſery.

Men of great projects and ſanguine hopes are apt to ſit and pauſe, and take an imaginary ſurvey of what they will do, and what they will be in the progreſs of life. But then death, like an apparition, ſtarts up before them, and threatens to cut them off in the midſt of their purſuit. But here no death threatens to extinguiſh your being, or ſnap the thread of your exiſtence; but it runs on in one continued everlaſting tenor. What a vaſt inheritance is this, unalienably entailed upon every child of Adam! What importance, what value, does this conſideration give to that neglected thing the ſoul! What an awful being is it? Immortality! What emphaſis, what grandeur in the ſound! Immortality is ſo vaſt an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinity to any thing to which it is annexed, however inſignificant in other reſpects: and on the other hand, the want of this would degrade the moſt exalted being into a trifle.

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The highest angel, if the creature of a day, or a thousand years, what would he be? A fading flower, a vanishing vapour, a flying shadow. When his day or his thousand years are past, he is as truly nothing as if he had never been. It is little matter what becomes of him: let him stand or fall, let him be happy or miserable, it is just the same in a little time; he is gone, and there is no more of him; no traces of him left. But an immortal! a creature that shall never, never, never cease to be! that shall expand his capacities of action, of pleasure or pain, through an everlasting duration! what an awful, important being is this!—And is my soul, this little spark of reason in my breast, is that such a being? I tremble at myself. I revere my own dignity, and am struck with a kind of pleasing horror to view what I must be. And is there any thing so worthy of the care of such a being as the happiness, the everlasting happiness of my immortal part? What is it to me, who am formed for an endless duration, what I enjoy, or what I must suffer in this vanishing state? Seventy or eighty years bear not the least imaginable proportion to the duration of such a being; they are too inconsiderable a point to be seen; mere cyphers in the computation. They do not bear as much proportion as the small dust that will not turn the balance, to this vast globe of earth, and all the vaster globes that roll in their orbits through the immense space of the universe.

And what shall become of me through this immortal duration? This, and this only, is the grand concern of an immortal; and in comparison of it, it does not deserve one thought what will become of me while in this vanishing phantom of a world. For consider, your immortality will not be a state of insensibility, without pleasure or pain; you will not draw out an useless inactive existence in an eternal stupor, or a dead sleep. But your souls will be active as long as they exist; and as I have repeatedly observed,

ſerved, ſtill retain all their capacities; nay, their capacities will perpetually enlarge with an eternal growth, and for ever tower from glory to glory in heaven, or plunge from depth to depth in hell. Here then, my fellow-immortals! here pauſe and ſay to yourſelves, "What is like to become of my ſoul through this long for ever? Is it likely to be happy or miſerable?" What though you are now rich, honourable, healthy, merry, and gay? Alas! terreſtrial enjoyments are not proper food for an immortal ſoul; and beſides, they are not immortal, as your ſouls are. If theſe are your portion, what will you do for happineſs millions of ages hence, when all theſe are fled away like a vapour? Are you provided with a happineſs which will laſt as long as your ſouls will live to crave it? Have you an intereſt in God? Are you prepared for the fruition of the heavenly ſtate? Do you delight in God above all? Have you a reliſh for the refined pleaſures of religion? Is the ſupreme good the principal object of your deſire? Do you now accuſtom yourſelves to the ſervice of God, the great employment of heaven? and are you preparing yourſelves for the more exalted devotion of the church on high, by a ſerious attendance on the humbler forms of worſhip in the church on earth? Are you made pure in heart and life, that you may be prepared for the regions of untainted holineſs, to breathe in that pure ſalubrious air, and live in that climate, ſo warm with the love of God, and ſo near the Sun of Righteouſneſs? Do not ſome of you know that this is not your prevailing character? And what then do you think will become of you without a ſpeedy alteration in your temper and conduct? Alas! muſt your immortality, the grand prerogative of your nature, become your eternal curſe? Have you made it your intereſt that you ſhould be a brute? that is, that you ſhould periſh entirely, and your whole being be extinguiſhed in death? Then it is no wonder you ſtrive to diſbelieve the doctrine of a future

future state, and your own immortality. But alas! in vain is the strife. The principles of Atheism and infidelity may lull your consciences into a stupid repose for a little while, but they cannot annihilate you. They may lead you to live like beasts, but they cannot enable you to die like beasts: no, you must live, live to suffer righteous punishment, whether you will or not. As you did not come into being by your own consent, so neither can you lay down your being when you please. And will you not labour to make your immortality a blessing? Is there any thing in this world that can be a temptation to you to forfeit such an immense blessing? O that you were wise! that you would consider this!

I shall now accommodate my subject to the present melancholy occasion, and endeavour to make a particular improvement of it.

Do you expect a character of our deceased friend? This is not my usual practice; and I omit it, not because I can see nothing amiable in mankind, nor because I would enviously deny them their just praises, but because I have things of much greater importance to engage your attention. The dead have received their just and unchangeable doom at a superior tribunal; and our panegyrics or censures may be often misapplied. My business is with the living; not to flatter their vanity with compliments, but to awaken them to a sense of their own mortality, and to a preparation for it. However, if you must have a character, I will draw it to you in the most important and interesting light. Here was a youth in the bloom of life, in the prime of his strength, with a lively flow of spirits, who seemed as secure from the stroke of death as any of us; a youth that had escaped many dangers by sea and land; a youth launched into the world with, no doubt, the usual projects and expectations of that sanguine age. But where is he now? In yonder grave, alas! lies the blooming, promising flower, withered in the morn-

ing of life. There lies the mortal body, mouldering into duſt, and feeding the worms. Come to his grave, ye young and gay, ye lively and ſtrong, ye men of buſineſs and hurry, come and learn what now may, and ſhortly muſt, be your doom. Thus ſhall your limbs ſtiffen, your blood ſtagnate, your faces wear the pale and ghaſtly aſpect of death, and your whole frame diſſolve into duſt and aſhes. Thus ſhall your purpoſes be broken off, your ſchemes vaniſh like ſmoke, and all your hopes from this world periſh. Death perpetually lurks in ambuſh for you, ready every moment to ſpring upon his prey. 'O that Death!' (ſaid a gentleman of a large eſtate, ſtrong conſtitution, and cheerful temper) 'I do not love to think of that Death; he comes in and ſpoils all.' So he does indeed; he ſpoils all your thoughtleſs mirth, your idle amuſements, and your great ſchemes. Methinks it becomes you to prepare for what you cannot avoid. Methinks, among your many ſchemes and projects, you ſhould form one to be religious. You may make a poor ſhift to live without religion, but you can make none to die without it. You may ridicule the ſaint, but he really has the advantage of you. 'Well, after all,' ſaid a celebrated unbeliever, 'theſe chriſtians are the happieſt people upon earth.' Indeed they are; and if you are wiſe, you will labour to be of their number.

But was our departed friend nothing but an animal, a mere machine of fleſh? Is the whole of him putrifying in yonder grave? No; I muſt draw his character farther. He was an immortal; and no ſooner did he reſign his breath, than his ſoul took wing, and made its flight into the regions of ſpirits. There it now dwells. And what amazing ſcenes now preſent themſelves to his view? what ſtrange, unknown beings does he now converſe with? There alſo, my brethren, you and I muſt ere long be. We too muſt be initiated into thoſe grand myſteries of the inviſible world, and mingle in this aſſembly of ſtrangers.

strangers. We must share with angels in their bliss and glory, or with devils in their agonies and terrors. And our eternal doom shall be according to our present character, and the improvement we make of our opportunities for preparation.

And do you, first, make it your main concern to secure a happy immortality? Do you live as expectants of eternity? Or do you live as though this world were to be your eternal residence, and as if your bodies, not your souls, were immortal? Does your conscience approve of such conduct? Do you really think it is better for you upon the whole, to commence fashionably wicked, or perhaps ringleaders in debauchery and infidelity, in a country overrun with all manner of vice? Is this better than to retain the good impressions you might perhaps receive in youth, and to act upon the model built for you in a religious education? Which do you think you will approve of in the hour of death, that honest hour when things begin to appear in a true light? And of which think ye will you be able to give the most comfortable account at the supreme tribunal? Brethren, form an impartial judgment upon this comparison, and let it guide your conduct. Behave as *strangers and pilgrims on earth, that have here no continuing city;* behave as expectants of eternity, as candidates for immortality; as *beholding him that is invisible, and looking for a city which has foundations eternal in the heavens.* In that celestial city may we all meet at last, through Jesus Christ. Amen!

SERMON

SERMON XXVIII.

JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

ISAIAH xxviii. 16, 17. *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner-ſtone, a ſure foundation; he that believeth ſhall not make haſte. Judgment alſo will I lay to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet: and the hail ſhall ſweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters ſhall overflow the hiding-place.* *

THE context, like many other paſſages of the prophetical ſcriptures, ſeems to have a double ſenſe. The primary ſenſe may be thus repreſented. The judgments of God were ready to break in upon and overwhelm the impenitent nation of the Jews, like *a tempeſt of hail, and a deſtroying ſtorm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing*, and bearing all before it. (ver. 2.) The prophet had repeatedly given them timely warning of theſe approaching judgments; but they ſtill continued ſecure and impenitent, and unapprehenſive of danger. They flattered themſelves they had artifice enough to keep themſelves ſafe. They thought themſelves impregnably intrenched and fortified in their riches, their ſtrong holds, and the ſanctity of their temple and nation. They might alſo think their arts of negotiation would ſecure them from the invaſion of the neighbouring powers, particularly the Aſſyrians, to whom they were moſt expoſed. Theſe were the lies which they made their refuge, and the falſhood under which they hid themſelves. Theſe, they imagined, like moles or ditches, who keep off the deluge of wrath, ſo that it ſhould not

* This Sermon is dated Hanover, Feb. 13, 1757.

not come to them, much less overwhelm them; and they were as secure as if they had made *a covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave*, not to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, *We have made a covenant with death; and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies* (that is what the prophet calls lies) *our refuge;* and under what he calls falsehood have we hid ourselves. (ver. 15.) It is in this connection my text is introduced; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which these sinners trusted; as if he had said, 'Since the refuge to which you flee is not safe, and since my people need another,' *Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;* that is, 'My promises, my providential care, the supporting influences of my grace, and the various means I shall take for the comfort and safety of my people in this national distress, shall as effectually bear them up as a firm foundation of stone does a building erected upon it. They that build their hopes upon this foundation, shall stand unshaken amidst all the storms and tempests of national calamity that may beat upon our guilty land.' *He that believeth shall not make haste*; that is, 'he that trusts in this refuge shall not be struck into a distracted hurry and consternation upon the sudden appearance of these calamities. He shall not, like persons surprised with unexpected danger, fly in a wild haste to improper means for his safety, and thus throw himself into destruction by his ill-advised precipitant attempts to keep out of it; but he shall be calm and serene, and have presence of mind to take the most proper measures for his deliverance.' Or the meaning may be, 'He that believeth, shall not make such haste to be delivered as to fly to unlawful means for that purpose; but will patiently wait God's time to deliver him

him in a lawful way.' The prophet proceeds, *Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;* that is, 'God will try the Jews with strict justice, as an architect examines a building with a line and plummet. Such of them who have built their hopes upon the foundation above described, shall stand firm and unshaken, whatever tempests fall upon them, like a regular and stately building, founded upon a solid rock. But as to others, they shall be overwhelmed in the public calamity! *the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies in which they trusted; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.* And then your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: *when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall they be trodden down by it.* (ver. 18.)

This seems to be a primary sense of the context; and thus, it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. In this view it is very applicable to us, in the present state of our country and nation, when the enemy is like to break in like a flood upon us. But I must add, that it is very likely that, even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to Jesus Christ. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words when they are applied to any other; and the connexion will admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus: 'Since the refuge of sinners is a refuge of lies, behold I will provide one that will effectually secure all that fly to it from all the judgments to which they were exposed.' *I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone,* &c. 'I send my Son into the world as an Almighty Saviour; and all that put themselves under his protection, and build their hopes upon him, shall be so safe, that all the calamities of life shall not do them a lasting injury; and the vengeance of the eternal world shall never fall upon them.'

But

But whether we can find Christ in the primary sense of these words or not, it is certain we shall find him in their ultimate principal sense. And we have the authority of an inspired apostle for this application. Saint Peter quotes this passage according to the LXX, with some improvements, and applies it expressly to Christ. *To whom coming*, says he, *as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* 1 Peter ii. 4, 6. Taking the passage in this evangelical sense, the general meaning is to this purpose:—The Lord Jesus is represented as a tried, precious, and sure foundation, laid in Zion; that is, in the church for the sons of men to build their hopes upon. His church thus built on him, is compared to a stately, regular and impregnable temple, consecrated to the service of God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices; and proof against all the storms and tempests that may beat upon it. It shall stand firm and immoveable through all eternity, for its foundation is sure.

But alas! though Jesus Christ be the only foundation, yet the sons of men are so full of themselves, that they venture to build their hopes upon something else, and promise themselves safety, though they reject this sure foundation. They think themselves as secure as if they had entered into a treaty with death and the grave, and brought them over to their interest.

But lo! the wrath of God will at last beat upon a guilty world, like a storm of hail, or break in upon it like an overwhelming torrent; then every soul that is not built upon this rock must be swept away, and all the other refuges and hiding-places shall be laid in ruins for ever.

The great God will also strictly inquire who is founded upon this rock, and who not. He will critically

tically try the temple of his church, like a workman, with line and plummet; he will discover all irregularities and useless appendages. And in consequence of this examination, the storms and torrents of divine indignation shall sweep away and overwhelm all that are not built upon this foundation, and that are not compacted into this building.

These remarks contain the general meaning of our text; but it is necessary I should be more particular.

Brethren, our nature, our circumstances, and the important prospects before us, are such, that it is high time for us to look about us for some sure foundation upon which to build our happiness. The fabric must endure long, for our souls will exist for ever; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement for ever. The fabric must rise high, for the capacities of our souls will perpetually expand and enlarge; and a low happiness of a vulgar size will not be equal to them. The fabric must be strong and impregnable, proof against all the storms that may beat upon it; for many are the storms that will rise upon us, upon our country, and upon this guilty world in general. Losses, bereavements, sicknesses, and a thousand calamities that I cannot name, may yet try us. The enemy is now breaking in like a flood upon our country, and we and our earthly all are in danger of being overwhelmed. Death will certainly attack us all; and that must be a strong building indeed which the King of Terrors will not be able to demolish.—Besides, when all the purposes of divine love in our world shall be accomplished, an almighty tempest of divine indignation shall break upon it, and sweep away all that it contains; and blend cities, kingdoms, plains and mountains, seas and dry land, kings and beggars, in one vast heap of promiscuous ruin. Or, to shift the metaphor according to the emphatical variety in my text, the fiery deluge of divine vengeance, which has been gathering and swelling for thousands of years, but has been, as it were, restrained and

and kept within bounds by divine patience, shall then rise so high as to burst through all restraints, and overwhelm the guilty globe, and turn it into an universal ocean of liquid fire. This resistless torrent shall sweep away all the refuges of lies, and them that trusted in them, into the gulph of remediless destruction. We, my brethren, shall be concerned in this universal catastrophe of nature; and where shall we find a support to bear us up in this tremendous day? Where shall we find a rock to build upon, that we may be able to stand the shock, and remain safe and unmoved in the wreck of dissolving worlds? What can support the fabric when this vast machine of nature, formed with so much skill and strength by the hands of a divine architect, shall be broken up and fall to pieces? Now is the time for us to look out; it will be too late when all created supports are swept away, and this solid globe itself is dissolved beneath our feet into a sea of fire. Now, now is the time for you to provide. And where will you look? Whither will you turn? This earth, and all its riches, honours and pleasures, will prove but a quicksand in that day. Your friends and relations, were they ever so great or powerful, can then afford you no support. If they can but find refuge for themselves, that will be all; therefore bethink yourselves once more, where shall you find a rock on which you may build a happiness that will stand the shock in that day?

If you are anxious and perplexed, I need only point you to my text for relief. *Behold*, says the Lord God, *behold I lay in Zion for a foundation-stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste.* Let me expatiate a little upon the properties of this foundation.

1. It is a stone: a stone for solidity, stability and durableness. 'Every thing else,' says the charming Hervey,* 'is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, ho-

* Theron and Aspasio, Vol. II. p. 361, &c.

nour an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of the true happiness.' And, blessed be God! he is sufficient for this purpose. Is a stone firm and solid? so is Jesus Christ. His power is almighty, able to support the meanest of his people that build their hopes on him, and render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm immoveable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal All upon this rock; it will stand for ever, without giving way under the heaviest pressure; without being broken by the most violent shock. Let thousands, let millions, with all the mountainous weight of guilt upon them, build upon this foundation, and they shall never be moved. Is a stone durable and lasting? so is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, his strength an everlasting strength, and himself the everlasting Father. He liveth for ever to make intercession for his people, and therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, to the uttermost point of duration, all that come unto God by him. Here is a stone that can never moulder away by the waste of all-consuming time. Parian marble, and even the flinty rocks decay: the firm foundations, the stately columns, the majestic buildings of Nineveh, Babylon, and Persepolis, and all the magnificent structures of antiquity, though formed of the most durable stone, and promising immortality, are now shattered into ten thousand fragments, or lying in ruinous heaps. But here is a foundation for immortal souls, immortal as themselves: a foundation that now stands as firm under Adam, Abel and Abraham, as the first moment they ventured their dependance

dependance upon it: a foundation that will remain the same to all eternity. Therefore it deserves the next character given to it, namely,

2. *A tried stone.* 'Tried,' says the same fine writer, 'in the days of his humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutity.' His obedience was tried; and it appeared upon trial that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried, by the abusive treatment he met with from men. His patience and resignation to the divine will was tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into his hand, and when the absence of his Father extorted that bitter cry from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. His love to his Father, and his zeal for his honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed without once languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men—to sinners—to enemies, was tried; tried to the uttermost: it was put to the trial whether his own life or theirs was most dear to him; whether he would rather see his enemies perish by the sword of justice, or that himself should feel the agonies of a cross. This was a trial indeed; and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

Jesus has also been tried under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing to expiate the most enormous guilt; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions; and to *save to the very utmost all that come unto God through him.* Ten thousand times ten thousand have built their hopes upon this stone, and it has never failed so much as one of them. Manasseh and Paul, that had been bloody persecutors, Mary

Mary Magdalen, that had been possessed of seven devils, and thousands more that were sinners of the most atrocious characters, have ventured upon this rock with all their load of sin upon them, and found it able to sustain them. This stone is the foundation of that living temple the Church, which has been now building for near six thousand years, and the top of which already reaches the highest heaven. All the millions of saints from Adam to this day, both those in heaven and those on earth, are living stones built upon this foundation-stone; this supports the weight of all. And this trial may encourage all others to build upon it; for it appears sufficient to bear them all.

But I must farther observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of *a tried stone*, it may be rendered 'a stone of trial;' or, 'a trying stone;' that is, this is the true touch-stone of mens characters. It is this that, above all other things, discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring forward and embrace him as a Saviour, they are true subjects to the King of heaven; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to Jesus Christ as a Saviour, is not a single command of God, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole Law and Gospel; it is the grand capital precept; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of heaven towards the sons of men. And therefore, while men refuse to submit to this command, they are guilty of a kind of universal disobedience; and it is in vain for them to pretend to have a real regard to God and his authority in any one instance whatsoever. If they obey God sincerely

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in falling in with this command, they will obey him in every thing; but if they will not obey him in this, they will truly obey him in nothing. Hence it is that good works are the inseparable fruits of faith in Christ, and that unbelief is the root of all evil. Submission to Christ is also the most effectual trial, whether the corrupt dispositions of the heart, whether the innate enmity to God, pride, stubbornes, &c. be thoroughly subdued? If a man is once made so dutiful, so humble, so pliable, as to submit to this humbling, mortifying method of salvation through Jesus Christ, it shews that divine grace has got an entire victory over him, and that now the rebel is so subdued that he will be obedient in any thing. There is nothing in the whole law or gospel to which the hearts of sinners are so averse, as this method of salvation; and therefore, when they are subdued to this, and made willing captives of the cros of Christ, we may be sure they have surrendered themselves to universal obedience.

This text has made strange discoveries in the world in every age. This touchstone has discovered many glittering virtues to be but dros. The Pharisees and Scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this trying stone was applied to them; and then it appeared what they were; then it appeared they were the most inveterate enemies of God upon earth. These were the builders that rejected this stone, and would not build upon it. They rather chose to build upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousnes. Nay instead of making him the foundation of their hopes, they made him *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 8. and they stumbled and fell into destruction. *Christ crucified*, says the apostle, *is to the Jews a stumbling block.* 1 Cor. i. 23. This test made strange discoveries also in the heathen world. Many of the sages of Greece and Rome had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue; they gloried in it themselves,

themſelves, and they were admired and celebrated by the populace. But when this ſtone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud diſdain, and thought it much more ſafe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of one that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touchſtone be applied likewiſe to the men of this generation, and it will diſcover a great many counterfeits. You will find ſome who have an amiable ingratiating conduct, who are temperate, juſt, charitable, and ſhine with the appearance of many virtues. You will find others who are very punctual in the duties of religion; they are frequent in prayer, and ſtrict attendants upon all the ſolemnities of divine worſhip: all this looks well. But tell them that all this is no ſufficient ground for their hopes of the divine acceptance: nay, that they muſt renounce all this point of dependance, as having no merit at all; and that they muſt, as helpleſs, guilty, ſelf-condemned ſinners, place their truſt only in Jeſus Chriſt; and they then begin to ſhew their pride: then their hearts riſe againſt this mortifying doctrine, and perhaps againſt him that inculcates it. They cannot bear that all their imaginary merit ſhould have ſuch contempt caſt upon it. They will own indeed, as others around them do, that Chriſt is the only Saviour; but their real dependance is at bottom upon ſome ſuppoſed goodneſs in themſelves. And thus they diſcover that all their righteouſneſs is but the proud ſelf-righteouſneſs of a Phariſee, or the ſelf-confident virtue of a ſtoic philoſopher, and not the humble religion or genuine ſterling virtue of a true Chriſtian. Thus the reception which men give to Jeſus Chriſt is the grand criterion of their character. And this is agreeable to the prophecy of good old Simeon concerning him: *Behold this child*, ſays he, *is ſet for the fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael, and for a ſign that ſhall*

shall be spoken against;—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Luke ii. 34, 35. The secret thoughts, reasonings, * and dispositions of many hearts, that were before unsuspected, are revealed by this trial. And I wish it may not make very ungrateful discoveries among you.

As this is a trying stone with regard to mens present characters, so it will be also as to their final doom and everlasting state. All that are built upon this foundation, however frail and tottering in themselves, shall grow up into a glorious impregnable temple, and stand firm when the frame of nature is dissolved. But all that are not built upon this foundation, however strong or well-established in their own conceit, or however high they raise the fabric of their hopes, shall be demolished and laid in ruins for ever. The one *may be likened*, says Christ, *unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.* And the other may be *likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.* Matt. vii. 24, 27. What a confounding fall will this be to those that have built a towering Babel of hopes that reaches to heaven! But,

3. This is a precious stone. 'More precious than rubies (to borrow the words of Mr. Hervey) the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations. Precious with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects greater than Jonah;—wiser than Soloman;—fairer than the children of men;—chiefest among ten thousand;—and, to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, altogether lovely.'

He is precious in himself, as possessing all the fulness

* *dailogismoi.*

nefs of the Godhead bodily, the fum total of all divine excellencies, and as clothed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In fhort, all moral excellency, divine and human, created and uncreated, center in him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleafed;* his elect, in whom his foul delighteth. He is precious to angels: *Worthy is the Lamb that was flain,* is their eternal fong. He is dear to all good men in all ages. *To you therefore that believe, he is precious,* fays St. Peter. 1 Peter, ii. 7. How precious are his atoning blood and meritorious righteoufnefs to the guilty felf-condemned foul! how precious is his fanctifying grace to the foul heavy laden with fin, and groaning under that body of death! how precious the affiftance of his almighty arm to his poor foldiers in the fpiritual warfare! how precious the light of his inftructions to the benighted wandering mind; how fweet the words of his mouth! fweeter than honey from the honey-comb. How precious the light of his fmiling countenance, and the fenfations of his love to the defponding finking foul! how precious that eternal falvation which he imparts! and how precious the price he paid for it! *not corruptible things, fuch as filver and gold,* fays St. Peter, *but his own precious blood.* 1 Peter i. 18, 19. In fhort, he is altogether lovely, altogether precious. Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious ftones in the univerfe, cannot repreſent his worth. O that a thoughtlefs world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then fay to his friends, *Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may feek him with thee?* I enlarge upon this article with the more pleafure, as I doubt not but the experience of feveral among you can affix your Amen to what I fay, and to much more. I am now but complying with the requeft of one of my friends, * at the diftance of near four thoufand miles, who writes to me thus:—'Dear Sir, recommend

* Mr. Benjamin Forfitt, of London.

recommend Him to poor sinners, recommend him to poor believers, as a most wonderful Saviour and Redeemer; abundantly able to deliver them from all that hell and sin can do to destroy them. O that his divine excellencies and worth could be set forth! Surely the most abandoned sinners would fall before him with ravishment and wonder.'—These are British sterling thoughts concerning this precious stone, my brethren, and I hope the same thoughts are to be found among you. O! that they were universal among us, and among all the sons of men!

4. This stone is a sure foundation. 'Such (says Mr. Hervey) as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world.—The rock of ages, such as never has failed, never will fail those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes upon this immoveable basis.' The foundation is sure, because it is of divine appointment. *Behold*, says the Lord God, who has authority to make the appointment, *behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.* It is also sure, because of the extent of his power, the perfection of his righteousness, and the eternity of his existence. But these I have already touched upon. Indeed his excellencies are so sweetly blended and complicated, like the colours of the rainbow, that it is hard to describe one of them, without running into another.

The author whom I have repeatedly quoted, thinks the words may be otherwise rendered: 'A foundation! a foundation! There is, says he, a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence thus understood: it speaks the language of agreeable surprise and exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek, and find not; it is here! it is here! This,

this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.'

5. This is a corner-stone. 'It not only,' says Mr. Hervey, 'sustains, but unites the edifice: incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages and manifold denominations, here, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love; hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy.' To this purpose, and in this style, speaks the apostle: *He is our peace who hath made both;* that is, both Jews and Gentiles *one*, one regular, compact, magnificent superstructure, *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom you* [Gentiles] *also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Ephes. ii. 14, 20, 22. Materials for this sacred temple are collected from thrones and cottages, from bond and free, from Jews and Gentiles, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; but notwithstanding these distinctions, they are all united in this corner-stone; all harmoniously compacted * into one regular, magnificent temple, where the God of heaven delights to dwell.

Jesus Christ may also be called a corner-stone, to signify his peculiar importance in this spiritual building. Hence he is elsewhere repeatedly called the chief-corner-stone, and the head of the corner. Matt. xxi. 42. Psalm cxviii. 22. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17. Acts iv. 11. 1 Peter ii. 7. Ephes. ii. 20. We are *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, in a subordinate sense; but *Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone.* He has the most important place in the building. It is he that holds up and connects all. Apostles, prophets, and all are but sinking sand without him. Their righteousness, their strength are nothing without him. On him all their doctrines depend, in him they all terminate, and from him they

* So the original word, *synarmologoumene.*

they derive all their efficacy. Take away this corner-stone, and immediately the saints in heaven fall from their thrones; and the saints upon earth, that are gradually rising heavenward, sink for ever. Take away this corner-stone, and this glorious living temple that has been building for so many ages, breaks to pieces, and covers heaven and earth with its ruins.

Having thus illustrated the particular properties of this stone, I shall take notice of this general property of it, that it is a foundation. So it is repeatedly called in my text, 'It is laid in Zion as a foundation:' it is a sure foundation. It must be the foundation, and have the principal place in the spiritual building, or none at all. *No other foundation*, says St. Paul, *can any man lay, than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And he must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstructure cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with his in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. To make our own merit the ground of our claim to his righteousness; that is, to hope that God will save us for Christ's sake, because we are so good as to deserve some favour at least for our own sakes, this is to lay a foundation of stone upon a quicksand. The stone would have stood, had it been in its proper place, that is, at the bottom of all; but when it is founded upon the sand, it must give way, and all the superstructure must fall. This is the grand fundamental mistake of multitudes in the Christian world. They all own that Christ is the only Saviour; but then the ground of their expecting salvation through him, is not his righteousness, but their own. Their own worthless works, which their ignorance and vanity call good, lie at the bottom of all their hopes, as the first foundation; and Christ's righteousness is rather a part of the superstructure than the entire foundation. This is *the refuge of lies*, the delusive hiding-place which multitudes are building all their lives with a great

a great deal of pains, and, when they think themſelves provided with a ſtrong everlaſting manſion, ſuddenly they feel themſelves ſwept away into deſtruction by the overwhelming torrent of divine indignation.

Here, brethren, let us pauſe a while, and turn our attention to a queſtion that I hope you have anticipated, 'Am I a living ſtone built upon this foundation? Are all my hopes of acceptance with God and eternal happineſs founded upon this rock?' Are you not deſirous to make this important diſcovery? to make it now while you have time? if you have made a miſtake, to correct it, by pulling down the old building, and beginning a new one on the right foundation? Have you no anxiety about this? If not, I muſt tell you, you care not for the God that made you, or the Saviour that bought you with his blood: heaven and hell are but trifles to you, and you are indifferent which ſhould be your eternal lot. You have not the ſenſibility of a man with regard to pleaſure and pain, but the ſtupidity of a brute, or rather of a ſenſeleſs ſtone. And if you continue thus ſtupidly careleſs about eternal things, you ſhall for ever be cut off from the rewards of pious diligence, and feel the dreadful doom of the ſlothful ſervant. Brethren, can you be indifferent in a matter of ſuch infinite conſequence? Let me remind you that a dreadful hurricane is gathering over this guilty world, which will burſt upon you, and ſweep you away, unleſs you be founded upon the Rock of ages. Think of the laſt part of my text; the *hail ſhall ſweep away the refuge, or hope of lies, the waters ſhall overflow the hiding-place.* You may be parts of the outward court of this ſpiritual building; I mean, you may be members of the viſible church; but that is only a ſcaffold to the ſacred temple, and when this is finiſhed, that ſhall be pulled down. Remember this building will be critically inſpected: the great Architect *will lay judgment to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet:* and

and if you do not stand that test, you will be demolished as useless appendages or incumbrances, and you never can be built up again; the temple of God will then be complete, and no new stones shall be added to it for ever. Therefore now is the time to discover fundamental errors, and correct them. Discover them you can and will in the eternal world; but O! it will then be too late to correct them!

Would you then know whether you are really built upon this sure foundation? If so, I shall willingly assist you to make the trial. And for this purpose I solemnly propose a few questions to your consciences in the sight of God.

1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build any where else with hopes of safety. If you have ever fled to him as a hiding-place, you have seen it was your last refuge. And have all your false hopes, all your refuges of lies been swept away? have you seen that honours, riches, pleasures, and all the world were but breaking bubbles? Have you been sensible that your own righteousness was a rotten foundation, and that you were just ready to sink every moment under the burden of your sins, and to be swept away by the torrent of divine vengeance? Like a sinking man, you have been ready to catch at every twig or straw for support; but were you obliged at length, with Peter, to turn to Christ and cry out, *help, Lord, I perish?* Have you let go every other hold, and taken fast hold of him as the only support? Have you given up all other grounds of hope, and as poor, guilty, perishing, helpless creatures, placed your whole dependance upon this foundation? If you can honestly give a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it looks encouraging: but if not, you may be sure you are building upon some sandy foundation; you are lurking in some refuge of lies, and must be overwhelmed at last in inevitable ruin.

2. Have

2. Have you ever been ſenſible of the precioufneſs, the excellency, and the ſtability of this divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Chriſt, it has been at once an act of the laſt neceſſity, and of the moſt free choice. O! how precious did this ſtone appear to you! like the loadſtone, it had a ſtrong attraction upon you, and you were effectually drawn to it. You need go no farther than your own hearts to find the truth of what I have ſaid of the precioufneſs of Chriſt; the precioufneſs of his ſtrength, his righteouſneſs, and every thing in him. *To you that believe, he is precious.* 1 Pet. ii. 7. This is the aſſertion of an apoſtle concerning all believers, without exception. And ſhall I conclude this is the real ſentiment of all in this aſſembly concerning Chriſt? Shall I conclude it, brethren? O! ſhall I allow myſelf to be ſo happy? Does your conſcience tell you there is ground for your ſaying that Chriſt is precious to you. Alas! is it not quite the reverſe with many of you?

3. Where is your habitual dependance? Is it upon Jeſus Chriſt alone? or is it upon ſomething elſe? Do you not feel the need of ſtrength, of ſpiritual life, of pardon and righteouſneſs, and eternal life? Certainly, if you know yourſelves, you feel the need of theſe things. And upon whom do you depend for them? Is it upon Jeſus Chriſt alone? Is it habitual, and, as it were, natural to you, ſince you firſt ventured upon this foundation, to reſt there, ſenſible that you have always need of this ſupport, and that every other foundation is but ſinking ſand? Brethren, what does conſcience reply to theſe queſtions?

4. Have you been formed into proper ſtones for this ſpiritual temple? Has God hewn you, may I ſo ſpeak, by his word, and broken off whatever was rugged, irregular, and unfit to be compacted into the building? Has he ſhaped and poliſhed your ſouls for a place in it? Do you feel this divine Architect daily carrying on this work in you, poliſhing you more and more into a reſemblance to Chriſt? Or are you

ſtill

still the same rough, irregular, unpolished pieces, with human nature, unsanctified in its present degenerate state? Then you may be sure you are not built upon this foundation.

I think I may pronounce these few queries fully decisive in this case. And what discoveries do they now make among you? Where now appears to be the foundation of your hope? Have not some of you rejected the chief corner-stone which God has appointed, and built upon a quicksand? If so, even a friendly tongue cannot but denounce some terrible things to you.

While you are not founded upon Christ, you shall, you must unavoidably, sink for ever. There is nothing that can support you. Build your hopes ever so high, the fabric will fall, and bury you in its ruins. Nay, this only foundation of hope and happiness will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, the occasion of your more aggravated guilt, and more dreadful destruction. There are a few texts of scripture which I would ring like peals of alarming thunder in your ears. *The same Lord of hosts who shall be for a sanctuary to his people, shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, for a gin and a snare; and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and snared, and taken.* Isaiah viii. 14. *Unto you that believe*, says St. Peter, *he is precious; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word.* 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. If this stone be not made by you the foundation of your hopes, it will fall upon you and crush you in pieces. Remember the declaration of Christ himself, *Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken;* that is, whosoever shall reject him while in a humble form in the days of his flesh, shall perish, *but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder;* that is, whosoever shall reject him in his state of exaltation, shall perish in a still more terrible manner. And will not all these alarming

alarming considerations have weight with you, to persuade you to make him your only foundation?

If you have already made him so, then be assured you are safe and immoveable for ever. Let storms of private or public calamity rise and beat upon you; let your fears and doubts rise to ever so high a deluge; let temptations make ever so severe attacks upon you, still the foundation on which you stand abides firm and unshaken. Nay, let all nature go to wreck, and seas and land, and heaven and earth be blended together, still this foundation stands firm, and the living temple built upon it will remain immoveable for ever. You that believe, need not make haste, you need not be struck into consternation upon the appearance of danger, nor fly to unlawful means of deliverance, your all is safe, and therfore you may be serene and calm. Is the burden of your guilt intolerable, and are you ready to sink under it? Or are you sinking under a load of sorrow? Whatever be the burden, cast it upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. This foundation is able to bear you up, however great the pressure. Come ye that are weary and heavy laden, come, and build your hopes, and place your rest here. O! what joyful tidings are these! I hope they will prove a word in season to some soul that is weary.

What now remains but that I should more explicitly point out this precious stone to you all, by illustrating the emphatical word *behold*, prefixt to the text.

Behold, ye poor sinking souls, behold with wonder and gratitude: here is a sure foundation for you; cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it, and it will support you. Say no more, 'Alas! I must sink for ever under this mountain of guilt;' but turn to Jesus, with sinking Peter, and cry, *Help, Lord, I perish;* and he will bear you up. Yes, whatever storms may blow, whatever convulsions may shake the world, you are safe.

Behold,

Behold, ye joyful believers. See here the foundation of all your joys and hopes. Do you stand firm like Mount Zion? See, here is the rock that supports you. Gratefully acknowledge it, and inscribe this precious stone with your praises. Point it out to others as the only ground of hope for perishing souls.

Behold, ye wretched self-righteous Pharisees, the only rock on which you must build if you expect to stand. Your proud self-confident virtue, your boasted philosophic morality, is but a loose tottering foundation. Virtue and morality are necessary to complete and adorn the superstructure; but when they are laid at the bottom of all, they will prove but a quicksand.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish! perish you must if you set at nought this precious stone. To you this only foundation is like to prove a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* To you the nature of things is inverted: the only ground of hope will heighten your despair; and the Saviour of men will be your destroyer.

Behold, ye glorious angels, behold the firm foundation divine love has laid for the salvation of guilty worms. It is as firm as that on which you stand. Are the affairs of mortals beneath your notice? No, we are concerned with Jesus too who is your head; and our connection with him must give us an importance in your view. Therefore join with us in celebrating the praises of this foundation. This precious stone appears to you in all its splendors: its brilliancy dazzles your admiring eyes. We also admire it as far as we know it; but to us it is like a foundation laid deep under ground, that supports us though we see it not. When shall we be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly Zion, where it will appear full to our view, and be the object of our delightful contemplation for ever and ever!

SERMON XXIX.

THE NECESSITY AND EXCELLENCE OF FAMILY-RELIGION.

1 TIMOTHY v. 8. *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

THE great Author of our nature, who has made us sociable creatures, has instituted various societies among mankind, both civil and religious, and joined them together by the various bonds of relation. The first and radical society is that of a family, which is the nursery of the church and state. This was the society instituted in Paradise in the state of innocence, when the indulgent Creator, finding that it was not good for man, a sociable creature, to be alone, formed an help meet for him, and united them in the endearing bonds of the conjugal relation. From thence the human race was propagated; and when multiplied, it was formed into civil governments and ecclesiastical assemblies. Without these associations the worship of God could not be publicly and socially performed, and liberty and property could not be secured. Without these, men would turn savages and roam at large, destitute of religion, insensible of the human passions, and regardless of each other's welfare. Civil and religious societies are therefore wisely continued in the world, and we enjoy the numerous advantages of them. But these do not exclude, but presuppose domestic societies, which are the meterials of which they are composed; and as churches and kingdoms are formed out of families, they will be such as the meterials of which they

they conſiſt. It is therefore of the greateſt importance to religion and civil ſociety that families be under proper regulations, that they may produce proper plants for church and ſtate, and eſpecially for the eternal world, in which all the temporary aſſociations of mortals in this world finally terminate, and to which they ultimately refer.

Now in families, as well as in all governments, there are ſuperiors and inferiors; and as it is the place of the latter to obey, ſo it belongs to the former both to rule and to provide. The heads of families are obliged not only to exerciſe their authority over their dependents, but alſo to provide for them a competency of the neceſſaries of life; and indeed their right to rule is but a power to provide for themſelves and their domeſtics.

This is implied in my text, where the apoſtle makes the omiſſion of this duty utterly inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity; and a crime ſo unnatural, that even infidels are free from it. *If any man provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel.*

The apoſtle, among other things, in this chapter is giving directions how widows ſhould be treated in the church. If they were widows indeed; that is, widowed and entirely deſtitute of relations to ſupport them; then he adviſes to maintain them at the public expences of the church. (ver. 3, 9, 10.) But if they were ſuch widows as had children or nephews, then he orders that they ſhould be maintained by theſe their relatives, and that the charge ſhould not fall upon the church. (ver. 4, 16.)

He ſuppoſes that the relatives of ſome of them might be unwilling to put themſelves to this expence: and to engage ſuch to their duty, he in the text expoſes the unnatural wickedneſs of neglecting it. *If any man provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel.*

By

By a man's *own* are meant poor relatives, who are unable to ſupport themſelves. And by his houſe are meant thoſe that are his domeſtics, and that live with him, as wife, children, ſervants. The former a man is obliged to provide for, but eſpecially the latter; and if he neglect it, he has denied the faith in fact, however much he may profeſs it in words; he is no chriſtian, nor to be treated as ſuch: nay, he is worſe than an infidel; for many heathens have had ſo much humanity and natural light, as to obſerve their duty, ſupporting their domeſtics and ſuch of their relatives as could not procure a ſubſiſtence for themſelves.

In order to make proviſion for our families, we muſt be careful or laborious, according to our circumſtances, and ſee that all our domeſtics be ſo too. *And him that will not work, neither let him eat.* 2 Theſſ. iii. 10.

'This, ſome of you will ſay, is excellent doctrine, and this is our favourite text, which we often deſcant upon to juſtify our eager purſuit of the world. This commandment have we kept from our youth up; and, as we exert ourſelves to provide eſtates for our children, we are not chargeable with any guilt in this caſe.' But ſtay, ſirs; before you peremptorily conclude yourſelves innocent, let me aſk you, are your domeſtics, your wives, children, and ſervants, nothing but meterial bodies? If ſo, I grant your duty is fulfilled by providing for their bodies. If they are only formed for this world, and have no concern with a future, then it is enough for you to make proviſion for them in the preſent ſtate. They are like your cattle, upon this hypotheſis, and you may treat them as you do your beaſts, fodder them well, and make them work for you. But are you ſo abſurd as to indulge ſuch a thought? Are you not fully convinced that your domeſtics were made for eternity, endowed with immortal ſouls, and have the greateſt concern with the eternal world? If ſo, can you think it

it ſufficient that you provide for their bodies and their temporal ſubſiſtence? I appeal to yourſelves, is there not as much reaſon for your taking care of their immortal ſpirits as of their periſhing bodies? Ought you not to be as regardful, and as laborious for their comfortable ſubſiſtence in eternity as in time? Nay, is not your obligation to family-religion as much more ſtrong as an immortal ſpirit is more important than a machine of animated clay, and the intereſts of eternity exceed thoſe of this tranſitory world? If then he that does not provide for his domeſtics a competency of the neceſſaries of life *has denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel*, what ſhall we ſay of him that neglects their ſouls, and takes no pains to form them for an happy immortality? Surely he muſt be worſe than one that is worſe than an infidel; and how extremely bad then muſt he be! He has more than denied the faith, however confidently he may profeſs it.

You ſee that though this text does not immediately refer to family-religion, yet it will admit of a very natural accommodation to that purpoſe: and in this view I intend to handle it.

Several of you, my hearers, I doubt not, have long ſince formed and practiſed Joſhua's reſolution; *As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* Joſh. xxiv. 15. While vanity laughs aloud, and impiety belches out its blaſphemies in families around you, *the voice of ſpiritual rejoicing and ſalvation is heard in your tabernacles.* Pſalm cxviii. 15. I congratulate you, my dear brethren, and hope your families will be nurſeries for religion in future times, and educate many for the heavenly ſtate; nay, I hope you have ſeen ſome of the happy effects of it already in the early impreſſions that begin to appear upon the tender minds of your dear children, and the promiſing ſolemnity and reformation of ſome of your ſlaves. It were to be wiſhed that all of you made conſcience of this matter, and it would not at all ſeem extravagant to expect it; for

for ſurely it would not be extravagant to expect that you, who attend upon public worſhip, and profeſs the religion of Jeſus, ſhould not ſo groſly deny the faith as to be worſe than infidels. But alas! my friends, though I do not affect to be a ſpy into your families, *I am jealous over you with a godly jealouſy*, leſt ſome of you habitually neglect this very important duty. Though family-religion be not the peculiarity of a party, but owned to be obligatory by chriſtians in general (and therefore chriſtians of all denominations ſhould conſcientiouſly obſerve it, if they would act conſiſtently with their own principles) yet are there not ſeveral in this aſſembly who live without religion in their houſes? Conſcience can find out the guilty, and I need not be more particular. It is certainly a moſt lamentable thing that any who have enjoyed ſuch opportunities for inſtruction, who have been ſolemnly and frequently warned, exhorted, and perſuaded, and who have come under the ſtrongeſt obligations to this duty, ſhould notwithſtanding live in the wilful and habitual neglect of it. For perſons to omit it for want of inſtruction about its obligation might be very conſiſtent with a tender conſcience, and nothing would be neceſſary to bring ſuch to the practice, but to convince them it is their duty, which it is very eaſy to do; but to omit family-religion in our circumſtances, my brethren, diſcovers ſuch a ſtupid indifferency about religion, or ſo inveterate an averſion to it, that it is lamentably doubtful, whether a conviction of the duty will determine you to the practice of it. When perſons have long habituated themſelves to ſin againſt light, it is hard to take any effectual meaſures to deal with them. All that the miniſters of the goſpel can do, is to convince their underſtandings, to perſuade, to exhort, to invite, to threaten; but ſuch are accuſtomed to reſiſt theſe means, and now they find it no great difficulty to maſter them. I therefore make this attempt with diſcouragement, and hardly hope to ſucceed with ſuch of

of you as have hitherto obſtinately fought againſt conviction; and the attempt is ſtill the more melancholy, as I know that, if what ſhall be offered does not prevail upon you to make conſcience of family-religion, the additional light you may receive will but render you more inexcuſable, encreaſe your guilt, and conſequently your puniſhment. This is one of the tremendous conſequences of the miniſtry of this neglected, diſregarded goſpel, that may ſtrike miniſters and people with a ſolemn horror. However, I am not without hopes of ſucceſs with ſome of you, who have not yet been curſed with a horrid victory over your conſciences. I hope that when you are more fully convinced of this duty, you will immediately begin the practice of it. But though I had no expectation of ſucceſs, I am ſtill obliged to make the attempt. Though nothing can animate a miniſter more than the proſpect of ſucceſs, yet he is not to regulate his conduct wholly according to this proſpect. He muſt labour to deliver his own ſoul, by warning even ſuch as may not regard it. He muſt declare the whole counſel of God, whether they hear, or whether they forbear. I ſhall therefore, my dear brethren, endeavour honeſtly this day to bring you to Joſhua's reſolution, *that you and your houſes will ſerve the Lord;* and let him who is hardy enough to deſpiſe it, prepare to anſwer for it at the ſupreme tribunal; for he deſpiſeth not man, but God.

I would not have you perform any thing as a duty, till you have ſufficient means to convince you that it is a duty; and I would not confine you to an over-frequent performance of the duty I am now to open to you; therefore when I have briefly mentioned the various parts of family-religion, I ſhall,

I. Prove it to be a duty, from the law of nature and ſcripture-revelation.

II. Shew in what ſeaſons, or how frequently family-religion ſhould be ſtatedly performed.

III. I ſhall conſider what particular obligation the

the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are inveſted with to maintain religion in their houſes. And,

IV. And laſtly, I ſhall anſwer the uſual objections made againſt this important duty.

As to the parts of family-religion, they are prayer, praiſe, and inſtruction. We and our families ſtand in need of bleſſings in a domeſtic capacity, therefore in that capacity we ſhould pray for them; in that capacity too we receive many bleſſings; therefore in that capacity we ſhould return thanks for them; and ſinging of pſalms is the moſt proper method of thankſgiving. Further: Our domeſtics need inſtructions about the great concerns of religion, therefore we ſhould teach them. But I need not ſtay to prove each of theſe branches to be a duty, becauſe the following arguments for the whole of family-religion will be equally concluſive for each part of it, and may be eaſily accommodated to it. Therefore,

I. I ſhall prove that family-religion is a duty, from the light of nature and of ſcripture.

To prepare the way, I would obſerve that you ſhould hear what ſhall be offered with a mind in love with your duty when it appears. You would not willingly have a cauſe tried by one that is your enemy: now *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God*, and conſequently while you retain that carnal mind, you are very unfit to judge of the force of thoſe arguments that prove your duty towards him. If you hate the diſcovery, you will ſhut your eyes againſt the light, and not receive the truth in love. Therefore lie open to conviction, and I doubt not but you ſhall receive it from the following arguments.

If family-religion be due to the ſupreme Being upon the account of his perfections, and the relation he bears to us,—if it be one great deſign of the inſtitution of families,—if it tend to the advantage of our domeſtics,—if it be our privilege,—then family-religion appears to be our duty from the law of nature.

1. If

1. If family-religion be a juſt debt to the ſupreme Being, upon account of his perfections and the relation he ſuſtains to us as families, then it muſt be our duty to maintain it according to the law of nature. Now this is the caſe in fact.

God is the moſt excellent of beings, and therefore worthy of homage in every capacity, from his reaſonable creatures. It is the ſupreme excellency of the Deity that renders him the object of perſonal devotion, or the religion of individuals, and the ſame reaſon extends to family-religion; for ſuch is his excellency, that he is entitled to all the worſhip which we can give him; and after all, *he is exalted above all our bleſſing and praiſe*, Nehem. ix. 5. that is, he ſtill deſerves more bleſſing and praiſe than we can give him. Hence it follows, that our capacity is the meaſure of our obligation to ſerve him; that is, in whatſoever capacity we are that admits of ſervice to him, we are bound to perform all that ſervice to him, becauſe he juſtly deſerves it all. Now we are capable of worſhipping him as a family, for family-devotion, you muſt own is a thing poſſible in itſelf, therefore we are bound to worſhip him in that capacity. If any of you deny this, do but put your denial into plain words, and you muſt ſhudder at yourſelves: it muſt ſtand thus, 'I muſt own that ſuch is the excellency of the Deity, that he has a right to all the homage which I can pay him in every capacity; yet I owe him none, I will pay him none in the capacity of an head of a family. I own I owe him worſhip from myſelf as an individual, but my family as ſuch ſhall have nothing to do with him. Will you, ſirs, rather run into ſuch an impious abſurdity as this, than own yourſelves obliged to this duty?

Again, God is the Author of our ſociable natures, and as ſuch claims ſocial worſhip from us. He formed us capable of ſociety, and inclined us to it: and ſurely this capacity ought to be improved for religious purpoſes. Is there any of you ſo hardy as to

ſay, 'Though God has made me a ſociable creature, yet I owe him no worſhip as ſuch, and will pay him none?' You may as well ſay, 'Though he formed me a man, and endowed me with powers to ſerve him, yet as a man or an individual, I will not ſerve him.' And what is this but to renounce all obligations to God, and to cut yourſelves off from all connection with him. Now if your ſocial nature lays you under an obligation to ſocial religion, then it muſt oblige you to family-religion, for a family is the firſt ſociety that ever was inſtituted; it is a radical ſociety, from which all others are derived, therefore here ſocial religion began (as it muſt have begun in families before it had place in other ſocieties) and here it ought ſtill to continue.

Again, God is the Proprietor, Supporter, and Benefactor of our families, as well as of our perſons, and therefore our families as ſuch ſhould pay him homage. He is the owner of your families, and where is the man that dares deny it? Dare any of you ſay, God hath nothing to do with my family; he hath no right there, and I will acknowledge none? Unhappy creatures! Whoſe property are you then? If not God's, you are helpleſs orphans indeed; or rather the voluntary avowed ſubjects of hell. But if your families are his property, muſt you not own that you ſhould worſhip him as ſuch? What? pay no acknowledgment to your great Proprietor? how unjuſt! The apoſtle argues, that becauſe our perſons are his, therefore we ſhould ſerve him, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. and ſurely the argument is equally ſtrong in this caſe. Further, Are not your families entirely dependent upon God as their Supporter and Benefactor? Should he withdraw his ſupporting hand, you and your houſes would ſink into ruin together. Are you not then obliged in a family-capacity to acknowledge and praiſe him? You alſo receive numberleſs bleſſings from him in a domeſtic capacity: every evening and morning, every night and day you find his

his mercies flowing down upon your houſes, and ſhall no grateful acknowledgments aſcend from them to him? You alſo every moment ſtand in need of numerous bleſſings, not only for yourſelves but for your families, and will you not jointly with your families implore theſe bleſſings from your divine Benefactor? Here again conſider the language of your refuſal, and it muſt ſtrike you with horror: 'I own that God is the proprietor of my family, that he is the conſtant ſupport of my family, that I and mine every moment receive mercies from him, and depend entirely upon him for them, yet my family as ſuch ſhall pay no worſhip, ſhall ſerve him no more than if we had no concern with him.' Can you venture upon ſuch a declaration as this?

2. If family-religion was the principal deſign of the inſtitution of families, then is family-religion our indiſpenſable duty.

That families were founded by God may be inferred from the creation of different ſexes, the inſtitution of marriage, and the various relations among mankind, and from the univerſal agency of his providence. Pſalm lxviii. 6. and cxiii. 9.

And that family-religion was the principal end of the inſtitution, is evident; for can you think that God would unite a number of immortals, heirs of the eternal world, together in the moſt intimate bonds, in this ſtate of trial, without any reference to their future ſtate? Were your families made for this world only, or for the next? If for the next, then religion muſt be maintained in them, for that alone can prepare you for eternity: or if you ſay your families were formed for this world, pray what was this world made for? To be the final reſidence? or to be only a ſtage along which to paſs into your everlaſting home, a place of probation for candidates for immortality? And muſt not religion then be maintained in your families? They ſhould be nurſeries for heaven; and that they cannot be, if you baniſh devotion from them.

If

If the conjugal relation, which is the foundation of families, was firſt inſtituted for religious purpoſes, then certainly the worſhip of God ought to be maintained in them. But the former is true: *Did not he make one?* Mal. ii. 15. that is, one of each ſex, that there might be one for one; and that the very creation of our nature might carry an intimation that polygamy was unnatural. 'And wherefore one?' that is, wherefore did God make but one of each ſex, when *he had the reſidue of the ſpirit*, and could have made more? Why his deſign was *that he might ſeek a godly ſeed;* that is, that children might not only be procreated, but retain and convey down religion from age to age. But can this deſign be accompliſhed if you refuſe to maintain religion in your families? Can you expect that godlineſs ſhall run on in the line of your poſterity, if you habitually neglect it in your houſes! Can a godly ſeed be raiſed in ſo corrupt a ſoil? Therefore, if you omit this duty, you live in families in direct oppoſition to the end of the inſtitution, and deny your domeſtics the greateſt advantage they can enjoy as members of a family: a conſideration which leads me to another argument.

3. If family-religion tends to the greateſt advantage of our families, then it is our duty; and to neglect it is wickedly to rob ourſelves and ours of the greateſt advantage.

If you deny that religion is advantageous, you may renounce the name of chriſtians; yes, and of men too. Religion places its ſubjects under the bleſſing and guardianſhip of Heaven; it reſtrains them from thoſe practices which may be ruinous to them in time and eternity; it ſuppreſſes ſuch diſpoſitions and paſſions as are turbulent and ſelf-tormenting; and affords the moſt refined and ſubſtantial joys.

Now I appeal to yourſelves whether it be not more probable that your family will be religious, if you ſolemnly worſhip God with them, and inſtruct them, than it would be if you neglected theſe duties? How

can

can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family-religion? Can prayerless parents expect to have praying children? If you neglect to instruct them, can you expect they will grow up in the knowledge of God and of themselves? If they see you receive daily mercies from the God of heaven, and yet refuse him the tribute of praise, is it not likely they will imitate your ingratitude, and spend their days in a stupid insensibility of their obligations to their divine Benefactor? Is it as likely they will make it their principal business in life to secure the favour of God, and prepare for eternity, when they see their parents and masters thoughtless about this important concern, as if they saw you every day devoutly worshipping God with them, and imploring his blessing upon yourselves and your households? Their souls, sirs, their immortal souls are entrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, while you neglect to maintain your religion in your families? Will you not be accessary to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last! Therefore, if you love your children; if you would make some amends to your servants for all the service they do to you; if you would bring down the blessing of Heaven upon your families; if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age; if you would deliver your own souls,—I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives.

4. You are to consider family-religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege

privilege granted by divine grace. How great the privilege to hold a daily intercourſe with heaven in our dwellings! to have our houſes converted into temples for that adorable Deity whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain! to mention our domeſtic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a ſupply! to vent the overflowings of gratitude! to ſpread the ſavour of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps and in anthems of praiſe? to have our families devoted to him while others live eſtranged from the God of their life! if all this does not appear the higheſt privilege to you, it is becauſe you are aſtoniſhingly diſaffected to the beſt of Beings. And ſince the Almighty condeſcends to allow you this privilege, will you wickedly deny it yourſelves? If he had denied it to you, you would no doubt have cavilled at it as hard: you would have murmured had he laid a prohibition on your family, and told you, 'I will accept of worſhip from other families; they ſhall converſe with me every day; but as for yours, I will have nothing to do with them, I will accept of no worſhip from them; you may not make mention of the name of the Lord.' How would you tremble if God had marked your families with ſuch a brand of reprobation? And will you put this brand upon them with your own hand? Will you deny that privilege to your families which would ſtrike you with horror if God had denied it? Will you affect ſuch an horrid ſingularity, that when other families are admitted into a familiar audience with the Deity, you will keep off from him, and pay him no homage in yours?

Theſe arguments are chiefly derived from the light of nature, and plainly ſhew that family-religion is a duty of natural religion. Accordingly heathens and idolaters have obſerved it. The heathens had their Lares, their Penates, or houſhold gods. Such were Laban's gods which Rachel ſtole from him, Gen. xxxi.

xxxi. 34. and such were that of Micah. Judges xvii. 4,5. These indeed were idols, but what did they stand instead of? Did they not stand instead of the true worship of the true God? What reformation was necessary in this case? The renouncing of these idols, and taking nothing in their room? or the renouncing of them and taking the true God in their place? Undoubtedly the latter. And will you not blush that heathens should exceed you? that you should be, according to the text, *worse than infidels?* And must you not tremble lest they should rise up in judgment against you and condemn you?

I now proceed to some arguments more purely scriptural, which prove the necessity of family-religion in general, or of some particular branch of it.

1. We may argue from the examples of the saints, recorded and commended in scripture.

Good examples infer an obligation upon us to imitate them; and when they are transmitted down to posterity with honour in the sacred records, they are proposed to our imitation, and as really bind us to the duty as express precepts.

Now we are here surrounded with a bright cloud of witnesses. Even before the introduction of the clearer dispensation of the gospel, we find that the saints carefully maintained family-religion.

On this account Abraham was admitted into such intimacy with God, that he admits him into his secrets. *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; since—I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord*, &c. Gen. xviii. 16, 18.

We find Isaac and Jacob, by the influence of his good example and instructions, follow the same practice. They, as well as he, built an altar to the Lord wherever they pitched their tents; an altar then being a necessary utensil for divine worship. This you will find repeatedly in the short history we have of these

theſe patriarchs, particularly in Gen. xxvi. 25. xxv. 1, 3. and xxxiii. 20.

We find Job ſo intent upon family-devotion, that he riſes up early in the morning and offers burnt-offerings: and thus he did, we are told, not upon extraordinary occaſions only, but continually. Job. i. 5.

The devout king David, after he had ſpent the day in the glad ſolemnity of bringing the ark to its place, returned to bleſs his houſe. 2 Sam. vi. 20. He had his hour for family-devotion; and when that is come, he leaves the ſolemnity of public worſhip, and haſtens home. This was agreeable to his reſolution, *I will behave myſelf wiſely in a perfect way: I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart.* Pſal. ci. 2.

Daniel ran the riſk of his life rather than omit this duty, which ſome of you omit with hardly any temptation. When the royal edict prohibited him, upon penalty of being caſt into the lions den, *he ſtill prayed and gave thanks to God, as he did aforetime—As he did aforetime.* This is added to ſhew that he had always obſerved a ſtated courſe of devotion in his family, and that it was not a tranſient fit of zeal that now ſeized him. Dan. vi. 10.

Theſe illuſtrious patterns we find under the dark diſpenſation of the Old Teſtament. How much more zealous ſhould we be who enjoy the meridian light of the goſpel, to keep the religion of Jeſus in our families!

In the New Teſtament we repeatedly find our bleſſed Lord in prayer with his family, the apoſtles. St. Paul thrice mentions a church in a private houſe, Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. and Col. iv. 15. by which he probably means the religious families of Nymphas, and that pious pair Priſcilla and Aquila. And Cornelius is an inſtance peculiarly obſervable, who, though an heathen, and ignorant of the coming of Chriſt, *feared God* (an expreſſion that often ſignifies to worſhip God) *with all his houſe; and prayed unto God always;* that is, at all proper ſeaſons. And when

when a divine meſſenger was ſent to him to direct him to ſend for Peter, we are told he was found praying in his houſe; that is, with his domeſtics, as the word often ſignifies. Acts x. 2, 30.

If it might have any weight after ſuch authentic examples as theſe, I might add, That in every age, perſons of piety have been exemplary in family-religion. And if you look round you, my brethren, you will find that by how much the more religious perſons are, by ſo much the more conſcientious they are in this duty. What though ſome, like the Phariſees, uſe it as a cloak for their clandeſtine wickedneſs, this is no objection againſt the practice; otherwiſe there is hardly one branch of religion or morality but what muſt be rejected too; for every good thing has been abuſed by hypocrites to diſguiſe their ſecret villany.

2. We may argue from ſeveral ſcripture-precepts, which either directly or conſequentially refer to the whole, or to ſome branch of family-religion.

The apoſtle Paul, having given various directions about relative duties in families, ſubjoins, *Continue in prayer, and watch in the ſame with thankſgiving.* Col. iv. 2. Peter exhorts *huſbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge*, &c.—*that their prayers might not be hindered*, 1 Pet. iii. 7. which certainly implies that they ſhould pray together. And here I may obſerve by the by, what is perhaps immediately intended in this text, that beſide the ſtated worſhip of God, common to all the family, it may be very proper for the huſband and wife to retire for prayer at proper ſeaſons by themſelves together. As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize thoſe things that could not be prudently mentioned before others. But to return: we are enjoined to *pray always with all prayer and ſup-*

plication, Epheſ. vi. 18. and ſurely family-prayer muſt be included in theſe comprehenſive terms.

As to family-inſtruction, it was expreſly enjoined upon the Iſraelites. *Theſe words which I command thee ſhall be in thy heart, and thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thy houſe.* Deut. vi. 6, 7. and xi. 19. They were commanded to inſtruct their domeſtics in the nature and deſign of the ordinances of that diſpenſation, particularly the paſſover. Exod. xii. 26, 27. And the pſalmiſt mentions all the wonderful works of God as what ought to be taught by parents to children from age to age. And muſt not parents now be under even ſuperior obligations, to inform their children of the more glorious doctrines and ordinances of the goſpel? Again, It is enjoined as a duty common to chriſtians in general, though they ſhould not be united in one family, *to exhort one another daily*, Heb. iii. 13. and to *teach and admoniſh one another*. Col. iii. 16. How much more then is it our duty to teach, and admoniſh, and exhort our families, which are more particularly entruſted to our care?

As to family-praiſe, it is a duty, becauſe thankſgiving is ſo often joined with prayer in ſcripture, Phil. iv. 6. Col. iv. 2. 1 Theſſ. v. 17, 18. and pſalmody muſt be owned the moſt proper method of expreſſing thankfulneſs by ſuch as own it a part of divine worſhip. *The voice of joy and ſalvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, Pſalm cviii. 15. an expreſſion that may properly ſignify, *praiſing God in pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs*, as we are commanded. Col. iii. 16.

And now, my brethren, I preſume you are convinced that family-religion is a duty, unleſs you ſhut your eyes againſt the light of nature and the light of ſcripture; and if convinced, you are reduced to this dilemma, either to ſet up the worſhip of God immediately in your families, or ſin wilfully againſt the knowledge of the truth. And which ſide will you chooſe? O, ſirs! the caſe is ſo plain, you need no time

time to deliberate; it is as plain as whether you ſhould chooſe life or death, heaven or hell?

If you from henceforth make conſcience of this important duty, it will be a moſt happy omen to your families, and to this congregation. If the grateful incenſe of family-devotion were aſcending to heaven every morning and evening, from every family among us, we might expect a rich return of divine bleſſings upon ourſelves and ours. Our houſes would become the temples of the Deity, and our congregation feel his gracious influences. Our children would grow up in the knowledge and fear of God, and tranſplant religion from our families into their own whenever they ſhall be formed. Our ſervants and ſlaves would become the ſervants of righteouſneſs, and heirs with us of the grace of life. The animoſities and conteſts that may now diſturb our houſholds, and render them like the dens of wild beaſts, would ceaſe. Vice would wither and die among us, and languiſhing religion would lift up its head and revive. This would certainly be the conſequence in ſeveral inſtances, if we were but to maintain family-religion in a proper manner; for God hath not commanded us to ſeek his face in vain; and if this deſirable ſucceſs ſhould not be granted univerſally, we ſhall ſtill have the comfort to reflect that we have done our duty.

But how ſhocking is the proſpect, if you determine to reſiſt conviction, and live in the wilful neglect of this duty! Your families are like to be the nurſeries for hell; or if there ſhould be an Abijah in them, *one in whom ſome good thing is found towards the Lord God of Iſrael* (1 Kings xiv. 13.) no thanks to you for it; you muſt not be puniſhed for your neglect of him as though he had periſhed by your iniquity.

Remember, ſirs, that the omiſſion of a known, practicable duty againſt the remonſtrances of your conſcience, is a certain evidence that you are entirely deſtitute of all religion; and therefore I muſt diſcharge the artillery of heaven againſt you in that dreadful

dreadful imprecation which, as dictated by inſpiration, is equivalent to a prediction or denunciation. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.* Jer. x. 25. Obſerve here that you are ranked with heathens that know not God; and that the divine fury is imprecated upon you, and it ſhall fall, it ſhall fall ſpeedily upon your devoted heads and your prayerleſs families, unleſs you fly out of its reach by flying to the Lord in earneſt ſupplications in your houſes. Will you rather run the venture, will you rather deſtroy yourſelves and your domeſtics too, than ſpend a quarter or half an hour, morning and evening, in the moſt manly, noble, heavenly, evangelical exerciſes of devotion? Surely you are not ſo hardy! ſurely you are not ſo averſe to God, and careleſs about your own welfare, and that of your deareſt relatives and domeſtics! I requeſt, I beg, I adjure you by your regard to the authority of God, by your concern for your own ſalvation and that of your families, by the regard you bear the intereſts of religion in this place, and your poor miniſter, that this may be the happy evening from whence you may date the worſhip of God in your houſes; that this may be the bleſſed æra from which you and your houſes will ſerve the Lord.

I proceed,

II. To ſhew in what ſeaſons, or how frequently, family-religion ſhould be ſtatedly performed.

Now it is more than intimated in ſcripture, that it ſhould be performed every day, and particularly morning and evening. Thus the ſacrifices under the law, which were attended with prayer, were offered daily, morning and evening. To this the pſalmiſt alludes: *Let my prayer be ſet before thee as incenſe* which was offered in the morning, *and the lifting up of my hands as the evening ſacrifice.* Pſalm cxli. 2. He elſewhere reſolves, *Every day will I bleſs thee.* Pſalm cxlv. 2. Yea, his devotion was ſo extraordinary, that he reſolves, *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry*

cry aloud. Pſalm lv. 17. So Daniel performed family-worſhip thrice a day. Hence we are undoubtedly bound to perform family-religion twice at leaſt in the day. And thus frequently it ſeems to be enjoined for common. *It is a good thing to ſhew forth thy loving kindneſs in the morning, and thy faithfulneſs every night.* Pſalm xcii. 1, 2. Farther, Reaſon directs us to morning and evening as the proper ſeaſon for family-worſhip: for, pray, which would you omit? Dare you venture your families out into the world all the day without committing them to the care of Providence in the morning? Can you undertake your ſecular purſuits without imploring the divine bleſſing upon them? And as to the evening, how can you venture to ſleep, without committing yourſelves and yours to the divine protection, and returning thanks for the mercies of the day? Again, The very courſe of nature ſeems to direct us to theſe ſeaſons. Our life is parcelled out into ſo many days; and every day is a kind of life, and ſleep a kind of death. And ſhall we enter upon life in the morning, without acknowledging the Author of our life? Or ſhall we, as it were, die in the evening, and not commend our departing ſpirits into his hands? Night is a kind of pauſe, a ſtop, in the progreſs of life, and ſhould kindle a devout temper in us towards our divine Preſerver. I ſhall only add, that the prophet hints that we ſhould ſeek the Lord as the Author of the revolutions of night and day; *Seek him that turneth the ſhadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night,* Amos v. 8. that is, ſeek him under that notion; and what time ſo proper for this as evening and morning? Therefore, my brethren, determine to begin and conclude the day with God.

III. I ſhall conſider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are inveſted with to maintain religion in their houſes.

In all ſocieties there muſt be a ſubordination, and particularly in families, and it is the place of the head of

of ſuch ſocieties to rule and direct. Particularly it belongs to the head of a family, when there is no fitter perſon preſent, to perform worſhip in it, to uſe proper means to cauſe all his domeſtics to attend upon it. The gentler methods of perſuaſion ought to be uſed where they will ſucceed; but when it is unavoidable, compulſive meaſures may be taken to oblige all our domeſtics to an attendance. The conſciences of all, bond and free, are ſubject to God only, and no man ought to compel another to any thing as a duty that is againſt his conſcience. But this is not the caſe here. Your domeſtics may plead a great many excuſes for not joining in family-worſhip, but they will hardly plead that it is againſt their conſcience; that is, they will hardly ſay that they think they ſhould ſin againſt God in ſo doing. Here then you may uſe your authority; and perhaps ſome word they hear may touch their hearts. You ſhould in common caſes cauſe them all to attend morning and evening, unleſs your ſervants are ſcattered in different quarters, and make conſcience of praying together, which you ſhould exhort them to do, and for which you ſhould allow them convenient time.

That you are authoriſed and obliged to all this is evident from God's commending Abraham for commanding his children, &c. from Joſhua's reſolving that not only he, but alſo his houſe ſhould ſerve the Lord; a reſolution he could not perform unleſs he had authority over his houſe to compel them, at leaſt externally, to ſerve the Lord, (Joſh. xxiv. 15.) and from the ſuperiority which you have over your domeſtics, which enables you to command them in this caſe as well as in your own affairs.

IV. And laſtly, I come to anſwer the uſual objections againſt this important duty of family-religion.

It would be more honeſt for people frankly to own that they have no heart to it, and that this is the real cauſe of their neglecting it, and not any valid objections they have againſt it; but ſince they will torture their

their invention to discover some pleas to excuse themselves, we must answer them.

1st Objection. 'I have no time, and my secular business would suffer by family-religion.'

Were you formed for this world only, there would be some force in this objection; but how strange does such an objection sound in the heir of an eternity? Pray, what is your time given to you for? Is it not principally that you may prepare for eternity? And have you no time for what is the great business of your lives?

Again, Why do not you plead too, that you have no time for your daily meals? Is food more necessary for your bodies than religion for your souls? If you think so, what is become of your understandings?

Further, What employment do you follow? Is it lawful or unlawful? If unlawful, then renounce it immediately; if lawful, then it will admit of the exercise of family-religion, for God cannot command contradictions; and since he has commanded you to maintain his worship in your houses, that is demonstration that every calling which he allows you to follow will afford time for it.

Finally, May you not redeem as much time from idle conversation, from trifling, or even from your sleep, as may be sufficient for family-religion? May you not order your family-devotion so as that your domestics may attend upon it, either before they go out to their work, or when they come to their meals?

2d Objection. 'I have not ability to pray; I am too ignorant.'

If you had a proper sense of your wants, this plea would not hinder you. Did you ever hear a beggar, however ignorant, make this objection? A sense of his necessities is an unfailing fountain of his eloquence.

Further, How strange does this objection sound from you! What! have you enjoyed preaching, Bibles, and good books so long, and yet do not know what to ask of God? Alas! what have you been doing?

Again,

Again, Is neglecting prayer the way to improve in knowledge, and qualify you to perform it?

Finally, May you not eaſily furniſh yourſelves with forms of prayer, which you may uſe as perſons weak in their limbs do their crutches, till you can lay them aſide. It is bigotry only that will ſay that you ſhould neglect the ſubſtance of the duty, if you cannot perform every circumſtance of it in the beſt manner.

3d Objection. 'I am aſhamed.'

But is this ſhame well grounded? Is it really a ſhame to worſhip the God of heaven, and ſhare in the employment of angels?

Are ſinners aſhamed to ſerve their maſter?

A little practice will eaſily free you from all this difficulty.

4th Objection. 'But, alas! I know not how to begin it.'

Here indeed the difficulty lies; but why will you not own that you were hitherto miſtaken, and that you would rather reform than perſiſt obſtinately in the omiſſion of an evident duty!

5th Objection. 'But my family will not join with me.'

How do you know? Have you tried? Are you not maſter of your own family? Exert that authority in this which you claim in other caſes.

6th Objection. 'But I ſhall be ridiculed and laughed at.'

Are you then more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the diſpleaſure of God? Would you rather pleaſe men than him?

Will you never become religious till you can obtain the applauſe of the wicked for being ſo? Then you will never be religious at all.

Think how you will bear the contempt of the whole univerſe at laſt for the neglect of this duty!

Therefore wherever you have your habitations, there let Jehovah, may I ſo ſpeak, have an altar, and there

there let morning and evening prayers and praiſes be preſented, till you are called to worſhip him in his temple above, where your prayers ſhall be ſwallowed up in everlaſting praiſe. *Amen.*

SERMON XXX.

THE RULE OF EQUITY.

MATTHEW vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

CHRISTIANITY is not a fragment, but a complete ſyſtem of religion; and it is intended and adapted to make us good entirely and throughout; it teaches us a proper conduct and temper towards every being with whom we have any connection, particularly towards God and our fellow-men. A chriſtian is a complete, uniform, finiſhed character; a character in which there is the moſt amiable ſymmetry and proportion; it is all of a piece, without chaſms and inconſiſtencies. A chriſtian is a penitent, a believer, a lover of God, conſcientious in devotion, and diligent in attendance upon every ordinance of religious worſhip; he begins his religion with a ſupreme regard to God, the Supreme of beings, ſenſible that unleſs he begins here, he inverts the order of things, and that all his religion and virtue muſt be prepoſterous and vain. To love the Lord his God with all his heart, and to ſerve him from that exalted principle, is the firſt and great commandment with him; and he obſerves it as ſuch. Religion, virtue, morality, and every thing that bears a ſpecious name

among mankind, is a poor maimed thing, monſtrouſly defective, if a proper regard to God be left out of the ſyſtem. It is ſhocking and unnatural for the creatures of God to be punctual in obſerving the duties they owe to one another, and yet entirely negligent of thoſe radical fundamental duties they owe to him their common Parent, the higheſt excellence and the original of all authority and obligation.

But though chriſtianity begins with, and chiefly conſiſts in our duty to God, yet it extends farther; it alſo includes a proper conduct and temper towards men. A good chriſtian is not only devout, but moral and virtuous: he is not only a dutiful ſervant of God in matters purely religious, but he is an uſeful member of every ſociety to which he belongs; and makes conſcience of juſtice, charity, and all the good offices due to his fellow-creatures. He is a good ruler, or a good ſubject, a good neighbour, a good father or child, a good maſter or ſervant; in ſhort, he endeavours to have a *conſcience void of offence towards God and towards men.* I have made it the great object of my miniſtry among you to bring you to pay a proper regard to God, as he has revealed himſelf in the goſpel of his Son; and for this purpoſe have inculcated the important doctrines of Faith, Repentance, Love, and thoſe other graces which are eſſential to every good man. But I muſt not forget another part of my office, which is, to teach you the ſecond great command, or ſummary of the divine law, namely, *That you ſhould love your neighbour as yourſelves*, and inculcate upon you thoſe important duties which you owe to mankind; and it is very extravagant for perſons to diſguſt theſe, through a pretended reliſh for the goſpel and the doctrines of grace, ſince theſe are no inconſiderable parts of the goſpel, and the leſſons of morality run through the whole New Teſtament.

When I would diſcourſe upon the duties of ſocial life, I cannot chooſe a text more pertinent or copious than

than that I have read to you, which is a fundamental and moſt comprehenſive rule of morality; *all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

In the illuſtration and improvement of this ſubject, I ſhall,

I. Offer a few things for the right underſtanding of this divine rule of ſocial duty.

II. Conſider the reaſon of it.

III. Open its excellency.

IV. Mention ſome important inſtances of particular caſes to which it ſhould be applied. And,

Laſtly, Shew the neceſſity and advantage of obſerving it.

I. I am to offer a few things for the right underſtanding of this divine rule.

It is proper then to obſerve, that as there is a great diverſity in the ſtations and characters of men, there is a proportionable diverſity in the duties which they owe one to another; and ſelf-love may make a man very extravagant in his expectations and deſires about the conduct of another towards him. On theſe accounts it is neceſſary that we ſhould underſtand this precept with theſe two cautions or limitations.

1. That we ſhould do that to others which we would expect and wiſh from them upon a change of condition, or if they were in our circumſtances and we in theirs. Every man ſhould be treated according to his character and ſtation; and therefore that conduct which may be proper towards me in my ſtation, may not be proper towards another in a different ſtation: but let me ſuppoſe myſelf in his place, and he in mine, and then that behaviour which I would expect from him, the ſame I ſhould obſerve towards him. Thus, for example, a magiſtrate is bound to protect his ſubjects, and to behave towards them as he would deſire a ruler to behave towards him if he were a ſubject; but he is not bound to yield that ſubmiſſion to his ſubjects while a ruler, which

which he may juſtly demand of them. The rule in ſuch caſes is, let every man act in character; let him perform to others thoſe duties which he would deſire from others if they were in his circumſtances, and he in theirs; and where there is a ſameneſs of circumſtances, there, and there only, his duty to others muſt be the ſame that he expects from them.

2. We ſhould make only our reaſonable and lawful expectations from others the rule of our conduct towards them. A man may expect and wiſh very extravagant and ſinful things from others: he may deſire another ſhould give him all his eſtate, or gratify his wicked luſts and paſſions by ſome criminal compliance: ſuch deſires are by no means to be the rule of conduct; for we cannot indulge them, nor others comply with them, without acting wickedly and unreaſonably. But thoſe things which we may deſire and expect from others, conſiſtently with right reaſon, religion, and the laws of ſociety, thoſe things we ought to perform to them; thoſe things which our conſciences juſtify, and not thoſe to which inordinate ſelf-love or ſome extravagant paſſion may prompt us.

If we underſtand this precept with ſuch limitations as theſe, we may ſafely follow it as a general rule of conduct; and then it will not be liable to ſuch objections as may be otherwiſe made againſt it. For example, a criminal may plead, 'If I were in the place of my judge, and he in mine, I would acquit him, and grant him his life.' Or a judge might think, 'if I were in the place of that poor criminal, I ſhould be glad my judge would forgive me; and therefore, if I would do as I would be done by, I muſt forgive him.' Such thoughts as theſe, ariſing from wrong principles, are not to be the rule and meaſure of our actions or expectations; for our own conſciences cannot approve of them in our ſedate and impartial moments. I proceed,

II. To conſider the reaſon of this precept.

Now the reaſon or foundation of it is evidently this,

this, namely, the natural equality of mankind. For notwithſtanding the great difference in the capacities, improvements, characters, and ſtations of men, yet, conſidered as men, they ſhare in the ſame common nature, and are ſo far equal; and therefore, in the ſame circumſtances, they have a right to the ſame treatment. A ſuperior, for example, ſhould treat his inferior juſt in the manner in which he would reaſonably expect to be treated himſelf if he was in a low condition and his inferior advanced to his ſtation. If there be any reaſon why another ſhould behave in ſuch a manner to me, there is the very ſame reaſon that I ſhould behave in the ſame manner towards him; becauſe he is to himſelf what I am to myſelf, as near, as dear, as important. Is it reaſonable my neighbour ſhould make no encroachments upon my property? It is equally reaſonable that I ſhould not encroach upon his; for his property is as much his as my property is mine. Do I expect my neighbour ſhould obſerve the rules of juſtice in his dealings with me? then certainly I ſhould obſerve them in my dealings with him; for he has as good a right to be treated according to theſe rules by me, as I have to be ſo treated by him. If it is reaſonable that he ſhould be tender of my good name, it is equally reaſonable that I ſhould be tender of his. If he ſhould relieve me in my calamities, certainly I am equally bound to relieve him when in the ſame circumſtances. And the reaſon is plain; he is to himſelf what I am to myſelf, and he is to me what I am to him, and therefore I am obliged to treat him as I would juſtly expect he would treat me; we are equal, and conſequently our obligations are equal, and our duties mutual or reciprocal. Hence you ſee that this precept is the moſt reaſonable thing in the world. My next buſineſs is,

III. To open the excellency of it.

And this appears (1.) from its comprehenſiveneſs; it includes all the ſocial duties of life; it is a ſhort ſummary

ſummary of the whole divine law, as far as it refers to our conduct towards man. This excellency Chriſt himſelf points out: *This*, ſays he, *is the law and the prophets;* that is, it is the ſubſtance of both: do to others what you would have others do to you, and then you do to them all that the law and the prophets, and I may add, all that Chriſt and the apoſtles require you to do. Now it is a great advantage to have the whole of our duty collected into ſuch narrow bounds, and preſented to us at one view: we are not ſent to pore over tedious volumes of laws and ſtatutes, or to gather up fragments of precepts here and there in order to learn our duty to one another; it is all ſummed up in this, *Do to others what you would have them do to you.* With this is connected another excellency of this precept; and that is,

2. Its conciſeneſs: it is what I may call a portable directory, which you may always carry about with you and eaſily recollect; and therefore you need never be at a loſs to know your duty. You may always know your own expectations and deſires; do to others then what you would expect and deſire from them, and you are right; you do all that the law and the prophets require you to do. Tedious precepts and long diſcourſes are not ſo eaſily learned or remembered; but the ſhorteſt memory cannot fail to recollect this conciſe command.

3. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is univerſal, and extends to all mankind, in all circumſtances; to ſuperiors, inferiors, and equals. It is true there is a great diverſity in the characters and ſtations of men, which it is not your buſineſs, nor is it in your power to alter; and there is a correſpondent variety in the duties you owe them. But you can eaſily imagine them all in the ſame circumſtances; or you can eaſily ſuppoſe yourſelves in their place, and they in yours; and then you can with equal eaſe look into your own minds, and conſider what treatment you would expect from them in ſuch a change of

of circumſtances; and that will immediately diſcover how you ſhould treat them in their preſent circumſtances. Thus the rule may be univerſally applied without impropriety.

4. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is plain and convictive. Common minds may be bewildered, inſtead of being guided, by an intricate, tedious ſyſtem of laws; but a man of the weakeſt underſtanding may eaſily perceive this rule. It is an appeal to his own ſenſations. 'What would you expect or wiſh from others? How would you have them treat you? Surely you cannot but know this: 'well, treat them juſt in the ſame manner.' This is alſo a moſt convictive rule; every man that thinks a little, muſt immediately own that it is highly reaſonable; conſult your own conſciences, and they will tell you, you need no other adviſer, and you are ſelf-condemned if you violate this precept. It is written upon your hearts in illuſtrious indelible characters: it ſhines and ſparkles there, like the Urim and Thummim on the breaſt of Aaron. I am,

IV. To mention ſome important inſtances of particular caſes to which this excellent rule ought to be applied. And here I ſhall throw a great many things together without method, that my deſcription may agree the nearer to real life, in which theſe things happen promiſcuouſly without order.

Would you deſire that another ſhould love you, be ready to ſerve you, and do you all the kind offices in his power? Do you expect your neighbour ſhould rejoice in your proſperity, ſympathize with you in affliction, promote your happineſs, and relieve you in diſtreſs? Would you have him obſerve the rules of ſtrict juſtice in dealing with you? Would you have him tender of your reputation, ready to put the kindeſt conſtruction upon your actions, and unwilling to believe or ſpread a bad report concerning you? Do you deſire he ſhould direct you when miſtaken,

miſtaken, and labour to reclaim you from a dangerous courſe? In ſhort, do you think it reaſonable he ſhould do all in his power for your good, in ſoul, body, and eſtate? Are theſe your expectations and deſires with regard to the conduct of others towards you? Then in this manner ſhould you behave towards them; you have fixed and determined the rule of your own conduct: * your expectations from others have the force of a law upon yourſelves; and ſince you know how they ſhould behave towards you, you cannot be at a loſs to know how to behave towards them.

If you were a ſervant, how would you have your maſter to behave towards you? Conſider and determine the matter; and you will know how you ſhould behave towards your ſervants. The ſame thing may be applied to rulers and ſubjects in general, to parents and children, huſbands and wives, neighbour and neighbour.

On the other hand, we may conſider this rule negatively. Do you deſire that another ſhould not entertain angry and malicious paſſions againſt you? that he ſhould not envy your poſterity, nor inſult over you in adverſity? that he ſhould not take the advantage of you in contracts? that he ſhould not violate the laws of juſtice in commerce with you, nor defraud you of your property? that he ſhould not injure your reputation, or put an unkind conſtruction upon your conduct? Would you expect that if you were a ſervant, your maſter ſhould not tyrannize over you, and give you hard uſage; or that if you were a maſter, your ſervant ſhould not be unfaithful, diſobedient, and obſtinate? Are theſe your expectations and deſires with regard to the conduct of others? then you have preſcribed a law for your own conduct: do not that to others which you would not have them to do to you: treat every man as another ſelf, as a part of the ſame human nature with yourſelf.

* —— Tu tibi legem dixiſti.

ſelf. How extravagant and ridiculous is it that you ſhould be treated well by all mankind, and yet you be at liberty to treat them as you pleaſe? What are you? What a being of mighty importance are you? Is not another as dear to himſelf as you are to yourſelf? Are not his rights as ſacred and inviolable as yours? How come you to be entitled to an exemption from the common laws of human nature? Be it known to you, you are as firmly bound by them as any of your ſpecies.

By theſe few inſtances you may learn how to apply this maxim of Chriſtian morality to all the caſes that may occur in the courſe of your lives.

Were I reading to you a lecture of moral philoſophy in the ſchool of Socrates or Seneca, what I have offered might be ſufficient. But in order to adapt this diſcourſe to the Chriſtian diſpenſation, and make it true Chriſtian morality, it is neceſſary I ſhould ſubjoin two evangelical peculiarities, which are the qualifications of that virtue which God will accept.

The firſt is, that all our good offices to mankind ſhould proceed not only from benevolence to them, but from a regard to the divine authority, which obliges us to theſe duties. We ſhould do theſe things not only as they are commanded, but becauſe they are commanded. We cannot expect that God will accept of that as obedience to him, which we do not intend in that view. Let us apply that rule to every ſocial duty, which the apoſtle particularly applies to the duty of ſervants to their maſters: *Whatſoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men.* Col. iii. 23.

The ſecond qualification of evangelical virtue or true chriſtian morality, is, that you perform it in the name of Chriſt, or that you depend not upon the merit of your obedience, but entirely upon his mediatorial righteouſneſs to procure acceptance with God. Without this all your actions of charity and juſtice, however fair and ſplendid they appear in the eyes of

men, are but proud philoſophic virtue, utterly abhorred by an holy God. But with this evangelical temper, you will be accepted as ſerving God, even in ſerving men. And O! that with theſe qualifications this rule may regulate the conduct of each of us! I am ſure there is reaſon enough for it, if the greateſt neceſſity, or the greateſt advantage can be a reaſon. Which conſideration leads me,

V. and laſtly, To ſhew the neceſſity and advantage of obſerving this rule.

(1.) The obſervance of this rule is abſolutely neceſſary to conſtitute you real chriſtians. I hinted at this in the beginning of my diſcourſe; but it is of ſuch vaſt importance, that it merits a more thorough conſideration. A chriſtian not only prays, attends upon religious ordinances, diſcourſes about religion, and the like, but he is alſo a ſtrict moraliſt; he is juſt and charitable, and makes conſcience of every duty to mankind; and morality is not only ornamental but eſſential to his character; and it is in vain for you to pretend to the chriſtian character without morality. An unjuſt, uncharitable chriſtian is as great a contradiction as a prayerleſs, or a ſwearing chriſtian. You can no more be a good man without loving your neighbour, than without loving your God. *He that ſaith he is in the light, and hateth his brother*, and neglects the duties he owes to him, is really in darkneſs even until now (1 John ii. 9.) let him pretend what he will. Therefore if you count it of any importance to be chriſtians indeed, you muſt do to others what you would have them do to you. No inward experience, no religious duties, no zeal in devotion can make you true chriſtians, or entitle you to the charity of others as ſuch, without a proper temper and behaviour towards mankind. I would have you, my dear brethren, to be complete finiſhed chriſtians; if there be any thing in the world that I have at heart, it is this: I would have chriſtianity appear in you in its full glory, unmaimed and well-proportioned; and therefore

therefore I would have you to be not only zealous in devotion in ſecret, in your families, and in public, but alſo juſt, honourable, and faithful in all your dealings with mankind; kind, affectionate, meek and inoffenſive in your conduct towards them; in ſhort, that you ſhould treat them as you would have them treat you. You find a great deal of fault with the conduct of others towards you, but conſider, have they not equal reaſon to blame your conduct towards them? My dear brethren, be yourſelves what you would have others be: Would you have them to be better than yourſelves? Would you meanly reſign to them that true honour? Do you deſire that they ſhould be better chriſtians and better men than you? What an awkward, perverſe, prepoſterous humility is this? But,

(2.) A proper conduct towards mankind in the profeſſors of religion is neceſſary to recommend religion to the world, and reflect honour upon their profeſſion; whereas the want of it brings a reproach upon the chriſtian name. The blind world has but little knowledge, and ſtill leſs concern about the duties that we owe immediately to God, and therefore the neglect of them is not ſo much obſerved; but as to the duties we owe to mankind, they themſelves are concerned in them, and therefore they take the more notice of the omiſſion of them, and are more ſenſible of the importance. And when they ſee a man that makes a mighty profeſſion, that talks a great deal about religion, and is zealous in frequent attendance upon ſermons, prayer, &c. when they ſee ſuch a man make no conſcience of the laws of juſtice and charity towards men; when they obſerve he is as deceitful, as over-reaching, as conſcientious, as ſordid and covetous as others, and perhaps more ſo, what will they think of his religion? Will they not think it a cloak for his knavery, and a ſtratagem to accompliſh his own wicked deſigns? And thus are they hardened in impiety, and confirmed in their neglect

of

of all religion. My brethren, it is incredible what injury the chriſtian religion has received from this quarter: the bad lives of profeſſors is the common objection againſt it in the mouths of heathens, Jews, Turks, and infidels among ourſelves. There is indeed no real force in the objection: you may as well ſay that moral honeſty is but villany, becauſe many who pretend to it are knaves, and make that pretence to carry on their knavery with more ſucceſs. It muſt alſo be confeſſed, that many diſcover much of their enmity againſt religion itſelf, by raiſing a clamour againſt the bad lives of its profeſſors; and that there is much leſs ground for the objection than they would have you believe. The true ſecret is this: they hate ſtrict religion themſelves, and would find ſome umbrage to expoſe it in others, in order to excuſe or defend their own neglect of it; and as they can find no objection againſt religion in itſelf, they abuſe all its profeſſors: and if it is evident that their viſible conduct is good, they would find out ſome ſecret flaw; and if they can diſcover no glaring defect in their duty to God, they pry into their conduct towards man, to diſcover ſome ſecret wickedneſs: and, alas! in too many inſtances their malignant ſearch is ſucceſsful; and they find ſome that make a mighty profeſſion, who are ſecretly guilty of ſome mean or wicked artifices in their tranſactions with men. Now they think they have found them out, and ſurmiſe, 'They are all ſuch; they pray and make a great ſtir about religion, but they will cheat and lie, when they can do it clandeſtinely, as readily as their neighbours.' This imputation, when made to chriſtians in the bulk, is not only ungenerous, but utterly falſe. But it muſt, alas! be owned, that the fact, upon which it is founded, is true with regard to ſome. And what a melancholy thought is this! The innocent, I mean the conſiſtent and uniform profeſſors of religion, ſuffer by this conduct of their falſe brethren; for the ſame artful hypocriſy will be ſurmiſed of them; and religion

gion itſelf ſuffers by ſuch conduct; for it gives a diſadvantageous idea of religion, as though it were all ſhow and oſtentation, and made its moſt zealous votaries no better in reality than thoſe that neglect and deſpiſe it. My brethren, I ſeriouſly tell you, I know of nothing in the world that would have a more efficacious tendency to propagate chriſtianity through the nations of the earth, than the good behaviour of its profeſſors. The impiety and bad morals of thoſe that make no profeſſion of religion is evident to all; and if all that profeſs it would live according to their profeſſion, then the difference would be diſcernable to all; and even common ſenſe would teach an heathen that it is a difference much for the better; and the world would ſoon conclude there is ſomething ſingularly excellent and divine in a religion that ſanctifies every thing within its reach, and makes its ſubjects ſo evidently better than all mankind beſides: they would need no laboured arguments to convince them of this point; their own conſciences would afford them ſufficient evidence of it, and then it would be ſufficient to make an heathen a chriſtian to bring him into the acquaintance of chriſtians; and it would be impoſſible there ſhould be ſuch a thing as a Deiſt or an infidel free-thinker in a chriſtian country: he would receive conviction from the practice of every one about him, and he would not be able to ſhut his eyes againſt it. I am ſorry, my brethren, the caſe is ſo much the reverſe through the generality of the chriſtian world. It is really melancholy that the name of a chriſtian ſhould raiſe in a ſtranger any ideas but thoſe of juſtice, benevolence, and every thing honourable and excellent. I am ſure our religion, as we find it in the Bible, is ſuch; but, alas! how different, how oppoſite is the chriſtian world! Thoſe that trade among infidels, or that are employed as miſſionaries among the heathen, can inform you what a fatal obſtruction the bad lives of its profeſſors is to the propagation of our holy religion. Why ſhould

ſhould they embrace a religion which leaves the morals of its followers as bad or worſe than their own? This inquiry the light of nature teaches them to make; and it is really hard to anſwer it ſatisfactorily. When a Turk could turn upon a chriſtian who inſinuated that he lied, with this reprimand, 'What! do you think I am a chriſtian, that I ſhould lie?' When an Indian can tell a chriſtian miſſionary, 'If your religion be ſo much better than ours, as you ſay it is, how comes it that you white people are no better than we? Nay, you have taught us many vices, which we knew nothing of till our acquaintance with you?' I ſay, when Turks and heathens can make ſuch repartees, is there any proſpect that chriſtianity ſhould be received among them? Alas! no. The ſame thing may be applied to thoſe careleſs, vicious, impious multitudes among ourſelves, who do indeed uſurp the name of chriſtians, but can hardly be ſaid to make any profeſſion of chriſtianity, as their whole lives are openly and avowedly contrary to it. If all who make a ſtricter profeſſion were to live in character, it would ſoon afford conviction to theſe profane ſinners: they could not but ſee the difference, and that it is a ſhocking difference for the worſe on their ſide. And now, my brethren, ſhall our holy religion ſuffer? ſhall nations be prejudiced againſt it? ſhall multitudes of ſouls be loſt by our miſconduct? O! can you bear the thought of incurring ſuch dreadful guilt! Well, if you would avoid it, obſerve the ſacred precept in my text. On the other hand, would you not contribute all in your power to render your religion amiable in the world, to convert mankind to it, and thus ſave ſouls from death? If you would, then obſerve this divine rule. Let the world ſee that you are really the better for your religion, and that your ſingular profeſſion is not a vain, idle, oſtentatious pretence. I have this particular much at heart, and therefore you will bear with me that I have enlarged ſo much upon it.

(3.) The

(3.) The obſervance of this ſacred rule of equity would have the moſt happy influence upon human ſociety, and would make this world a little paradiſe. If men did to others whatever they would have others do to them, ſuch a conduct would put an end to a great part of the miſeries of mankind. Then there would be no wars and tumults among the nations, no jealouſies and contentions in families, no oppreſſion, fraud, or any form of injuſtice, no jars, animoſities, and confuſions in neighbourhoods; but human ſociety would be a company of friends, and juſtice, equity, love, charity, kindneſs, gratitude, ſympathy, and all the amiable train of virtues, would reign among them. What an happy ſtate of things would this be! How different from the preſent! And ſhall not each of us contribute all in our power to bring about ſuch a glorious revolution?

(4.) The obſervance of this rule is a piece of prudence with regard to ourſelves. It is of great importance to our happineſs in this world, that others ſhould treat us well. There are none of us abſolutely independent of others; we are not able to ſtand as the butt of univerſal oppoſition; or if we are now in happy circumſtances, we ſtand upon a ſlippery place, and may ſoon fall as low as our neighbours. Now the readieſt way to be treated well by others, is to treat others well ourſelves. If you would have others to behave agreeable to you, you muſt do ſo to them; do what you expect from them. Men often complain of bad neighbours, when they are the occaſion of it, by being bad neighbours themſelves. There is hardly any place ſo bad, but a benevolent inoffenſive man may live peaceably in it; but the contentious will always meet with contention; for they raiſe the ſtorm which diſturbs them. Therefore, if no other argument has weight with you, for your own ſakes obſerve this divine rule.

(5.) I ſhall only add, that unleſs you conſcientiouſly obſerve the duties of ſocial life, you cannot enter the

the kingdom of heaven. Not only ſins done immediately againſt God, and the omiſſion of duties to him, but alſo ſins againſt our fellow-creatures, and the omiſſion of the duties we owe to them, will exclude men from the kingdom of God. Of this we have abundant evidence in ſcripture. I need only refer you to two comprehenſive paſſages, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. in which you ſee that all unrighteouſneſs, hatred, variance, ſtrife, envy, extortion, and the like, which are offences againſt men, will as certainly ſhut the gates of heaven againſt you as idolatry or hereſies, which are ſins againſt God. The moſt plauſible experiences, the greateſt diligence and zeal in devotion, and the moſt promiſing profeſſion of religion, will never bring you to heaven, tho' abſolutely neceſſary in their place, unleſs you alſo abound in good works towards men. And ſhall this argument have no weight with you? Is your eternal ſalvation an inſignificant thing with you? Are you proof againſt the terrors of everlaſting deſtruction? If you would enjoy the one, and eſcape the other, 'Do to others what you would have them do to you.'

I ſhall conclude with one or two reflections.

(1.) If this be the rule of our conduct, alas! how little true morality is there in the world! Men ſeem to act as if they were entirely detached from one another, and had no connection, or were not at all concerned to promote each other's intereſt. Self-intereſt is their purſuit, and ſelf-love their ruling paſſion; if that be but promoted, and this gratified, they have little or no concern beſides. 'Let their neighbours look to themſelves, they have no buſineſs with them.' If I ſhall only mention one particular caſe under this general rule, namely, commerce and bargaining, what a ſcene of iniquity would it open! Men ſeem to make this their rule, to get as much for what they ſell, and give as little for what they buy, as they can: they hardly ever think what the real value of the thing is, and whether the other party has a tolerable

able bargain of it: 'Let him look, say they, to that; it is none of their care.' Alas! my brethren, where are the laws of justice and charity, when men behave in this manner; and yet, alas! how common is such a conduct in the commercial world!

(2.) We ought to examine our own conduct in this respect, and it will go a great way to determine whether our religion be true and sincere, or not. If we make conscience of social duty, it is a promising sign that God has written his law in our hearts. But if we can willingly indulge ourselves in any sinful and mean conduct towards men, we may be sure our religion is vain, whatever our pretension be. Let us feel then the pulse of our souls, whether it beats warm and full, both with the love of God and the love of our neighbour. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, or venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us think on these things.* Phil. iv. 8.

SERMON XXXI.

DEDICATION TO GOD ARGUED FROM REDEEMING MERCY.*

1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. *What! know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

MY first and last business with you to-day is to assert a claim which perhaps you have but little thought of, or acknowledged. In the name of

* The discourse is said by the author to be Sermons preparatory to the Lord's Supper.

God I enter a claim to you, to the whole of you, ſoul and body, and whatever you poſſeſs; to every one of you, high and low, old and young, freemen as well as ſlaves; I enter a claim to you all as God's right, and not your own: and I would endeavour to bring you voluntarily to acknowledge his right, and by your own free act to ſurrender and devote yourſelves to him, whoſe you are, and whom therefore you are bound to ſerve.

It is high time for me to aſſert, and for you to acknowledge God's right to you; for have not many of you behaved as if you thought you were your own, and had no maſter or proprietor? Have you not practically ſaid, with thoſe inſolent ſinners the pſalmiſt mentions, *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Pſalm xii. 4. for have you not refuſed to employ your tongues for the honour of God, and ſpoke what you pleaſed, without any controul from his law! Have you not ſaid by your practice, what Pharaoh was bold and plain enough to ſpeak out in words, *Who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey his voice?* Exod. v. 2. Have you not aimed at pleaſing yourſelves, as if you were not bound to pleaſe the ſupreme Lord of heaven and earth, whoſe authority confines the ſtubborn powers of hell in chains of everlaſting darkneſs, and ſets all the armies of heaven in motion to execute his ſovereign orders? Have you not followed your own inclinations, as if you were at liberty to do what you pleaſed? Or if you have in ſome inſtances reſtrained yourſelves, have not the reſtraints proceeded, not from a regard to his authority, but from a regard to your own pleaſure or intereſt? Have you not uſed your bodies, your ſouls, your eſtates, and all your poſſeſſions, as if they were your own abſolutely and independently, and there were no God on high, who has an original and ſuperior claim to you, and all that you are and have? Do not your own conſciences convict you of theſe things? Is it not then high time for you to be made

ſenſible

ſenſible whoſe right you are? that you are not your own, but God's.

This reaſon would render this ſubject very ſeaſonable at any time. But there is another reaſon which peculiarly determines me to make choice of it to-day, and that is, the greateſt buſineſs of this day is to ſurrender and devote ourſelves to God as his ſervants for ever. In ſo ſolemn a poſture as at the Lord's table, in ſo affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happineſs, and with ſuch ſolemn emblems as thoſe of bread and wine in our hands, which repreſent the broken body and flowing blood of Jeſus, we are to yield ourſelves to God, and ſeal our indenture to be his. This is the ſolemn buſineſs we are now entering upon. And that we may perform it the more heartily, it is fit we ſhould be ſenſible that we are doing no more than what we are obliged to do, no more than what God has a right to require us to do, ſeeing we are not our own, but his.

The apoſtle ſpeaks of it with an air of ſurpriſe and horror, that any under the profeſſion of chriſtianity ſhould be ſo ſtupid as not to know and acknowledge that they are not their own, but God's. *What!* ſays he, *know ye not—that ye are not your own?* As if he had ſaid, Can you be ignorant in ſo plain a point as this? Or can you be ſo hardy, as knowing the truth, to practiſe contrary to knowing it? Knowing you are not your own, dare you act as if you were your own? Acknowledging that you are God's, dare you withhold from him his property? Will a man rob God? Shall not his profeſſed ſervants ſerve him? Since your bodies and your ſouls are his, dare you uſe them as if they were abſolutely your own, and refuſe to glorify him with them?

The ſame claim, my brethren, is valid with regard to you, which the apoſtle here aſſerts with regard to the Corinthians. You are no more your own than they were; you are as much God's property as they were.

And

And his property in you depends upon ſuch firm foundations as cannot be ſhaken without the loſs of your being, and your relapſe into nothing. If you made yourſelves, you may call yourſelves your own. But you know the curious frames of your bodies were not formed by your hands, nor was it your feeble breath that inſpired them with thoſe immortal ſparks of reaſon, your ſouls. A greater abſurdity cannot be mentioned, than that a creature ſhould be its own creator; for then it muſt act before it had a being. You owe your being to a divine Original, the Fountain of all exiſtence. It was Jehovah, the uncreated, all-creating Jehovah, who ſo wonderfully and fearfully formed your bodies, and who is likewiſe the Father of your ſpirits. And what right can be more valid than that founded upon creation? It is a right founded upon your very being, and which nothing but the entire loſs of being can deſtroy. He that makes ſervants out of nothing, has he not a right to their ſervice? Did he form your ſouls and bodies, and may he not require you to glorify him with them? Can you call them your own, or dare to diſpoſe of them as you pleaſe, without any regard to God, when you would have had neither ſoul nor body, nor been any thing at all, if it had not been for him? You think you have ſuch a right to a thouſand things as entitles you to the uſe of them; but ſhew me one thing if you can, to which you have ſuch a right as God has to you, to your whole ſouls and bodies, to you, who have no maſter upon earth, and who are your own property in excluſion to all the claims of your fellow-creatures. Did you produce out of nothing any of thoſe things you call yours? No, you only bought them with money, or you formed them into what they are, out of materials already created to your hand. But it is Jehovah's right alone that is founded upon creation. And will you not acknowledge this right? Will not your hearts declare even now, 'My Maker, God, this ſoul and this body are thine;

thine; and to thee I cheerfully ſurrender them. The work of thine own hands ſhall be thine by my free and full conſent; and I renounce all claim to myſelf that is not dependent upon and ſubordinate to thee.'

Again, the providence of God towards you has made you his abſolute property; and on this footing he claims your ſervice. You could no more ſupport yourſelves in being, than you could give being to yourſelves at firſt. Who but he has preſerved you alive for ſo many months and years; preſerved you ſo frail and precarious, ſurrounded with ſo many dangers, and expoſed to ſo many wants? Whoſe earth have you trod upon? Whoſe air have you breathed in? Whoſe creatures have you fed upon? *The earth is the Lord's and the fulneſs thereof*, Pſalm xxiv. 1. and conſequently all the ſupports and enjoyments, all the neceſſaries and comforts of life are his. Show me the mercy, if you can, which you created. Mention the moment, if you can, in which you ſupported your own life, independently of the Almighty. Show me that property of yours, if you can, which is ſo independent upon you as you are upon him. This moment, if he ſhould withdraw his ſupporting hand, you would inſtantaneouſly become as entirely nothing as you were ten thouſand years ago. If he ſhould now ſtrip you of all that is his, and only leave you what is originally your own, he would leave you nothing at all. The earth and all its productions, the air, the light, and your very being would be entirely vaniſhed, and your place would be no more known in the creation. O! that you knew, O! that you felt, O! that you practically acknowledged how entirely you are dependent upon God! And dare you call yourſelves your own, when you cannot ſupport yourſelves in being or in happineſs one moment? O! renounce ſo haughty a claim, and this day give up yourſelves to God as his. A ſon honoureth his father: and ſince God is your Father, where is his honour? The dull ox knows his

his owner, and the ſtupid aſs knows his maſter's crib; and will not you know and acknowledge your divine Benefactor and Preſerver? He has nouriſhed and brought you up as his children; and dare you rebel againſt him?

Thus you ſee the divine right to you may be made good upon the footing of creation and Providence. But this is not the foundation of right which the apoſtle here has in view, or which I would chiefly inſiſt upon. The ground of claim that he has here in view, is that of redemption by Jeſus Chriſt; *ye are not your own*, ſays he, *for ye are bought with a price.* This is a ground of claim ſtill more endearing. You are God's not only becauſe he made you, becauſe he preſerved you, but becauſe he hath bought you; bought you, ſaith St. Peter, *not with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot.* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. What an expenſive purchaſe is this! a purchaſe by blood! not by the blood of bulls and of goats, not by the blood of man, but by the blood of Jeſus, which St. Paul does not ſcruple to call the blood of God himſelf; *the church of God*, ſays he, *which he has purchaſed with his own blood.* Acts xx. 28. This was the immenſe ranſom; this is what the apoſtle calls a price, by way of eminence in my text; *ye are bought with a price;* a price ſo vaſt and diſtinguiſhable, that it may eaſily be known without being particularly deſcribed; every chriſtian muſt know it, if he is but told that it is the price with which he was bought.

The words *buying*, *purchaſe*, *ranſom*, *redemption*, and the like, occur ſo often in the account of our ſalvation by Chriſt, that they deſerve a particular explication.

They are ſometimes taken in a proper ſenſe, and ſometimes in an improper, in the ſacred ſpriptures. I ſhall particularly conſider the word *redeem*, which moſt frequently occurs as a ſpecimen of the reſt.

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To redeem in a lax improper ſenſe, ſignifies in general, to deliver from oppreſſion and miſery, in whatever way the deliverance is effected, and not neceſſarily implying that it is effected by a proper payment of a price. So you very often read of the Iſraelites being redeemed from ſlavery in Egypt; and on this account God aſſumed the title of their Redeemer. In this lax ſenſe of the word we have been redeemed by Jeſus Chriſt: redeemed, that is, delivered from ſlavery to ſin and Satan. Our freedom from ſin is called redemption by Chriſt in the ſacred language. So in Tit. ii. 14. the apoſtle ſays, *Our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* It is by Chriſt's freely giving himſelf a ſacrifice for us, that the influences of the holy ſpirit are procured to mortify our corrupt diſpoſitions, and ſubdue the power of ſin, and thus to free us from our ſordid ſlavery to its uſurped juriſdiction. Sin has ſtill retained its power over fallen angels: through the ſpace of at leaſt near ſix thouſand years, notwithſtanding all the puniſhment they have already ſuffered for it, and notwithſtanding all that they have ſeen of the wonders of divine Providence, and the amiable and tremendous diſplays of the divine perfections, they ſin on, ſtill impenitent and unreformed, and will do ſo for ever. But many a ſinner of the race of man has been recovered to a ſtate of holineſs and happineſs, and been freed from the tyrannical dominion of ſin. And the reaſon is, Jeſus did not give himſelf for the fallen angels, but for the fallen ſons of Adam: for theſe, but not for the former, he purchaſed ſanctifying grace; and this makes the difference. While the former are hardened more and more in wickedneſs in the furnance of hell, the fallen offſpring of Adam are purified by his ſpirit, and made a peculiar people, a people diſtinguiſhable from all others by their purity and zeal for good works, and peculiarly his above all others. St. Peter

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alſo uſes the word *redeem* in the ſame ſenſe, to ſignify deliverance from ſin. *Ye know*, ſays he, *that ye were redeemed from your vain converſation by the precious blood of Chriſt.* 1 Peter i. 18, 19. This is a very glorious redemption indeed, much more illuſtrious than the deliverance of the Iſraelites from the Babyloniſh captivity and Egyptian bondage; which is ſo often called Redemption.

Again, Jeſus Chriſt has redeemed; that is, delivered his people from the guilt of ſin; and conſequently from the wrath of God, and the puniſhments of hell. *He obtained eternal redemption for his people.* Heb. ix. 12. *Jeſus delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Theſſ. i. 10. All the ſaints that are now in heaven, and all that ſhall be added to their happy number in all the future ages of the world, are indebted to him for their great, their everlaſting deliverance. To Jeſus they owe it, that they have the actual enjoyment of complete happineſs, and the ſure proſpect of its everlaſting continuance, inſtead of feeling the vengeance of eternal fire. To Jeſus they owe it, that they rejoice for ever in the ſmiles of divine love, inſtead of ſinking under the frowns of divine indignation. To Jeſus they owe it, that they enjoy the pleaſures of an applauding conſcience, inſtead of agonizing under the pangs of guilt, and the horrors of everlaſting deſpair. To Jeſus they owe it, that their voice is employed in ſongs of praiſe and triumph, inſtead of infernal groans and howlings. To Jeſus they are indebted for all this; and they are very ſenſible of their obligations; and their everlaſting anthems acknowledge it. St. John once heard them, and I hope we ſhall hear them ere long, ſinging with a loud voice, *Thou art worthy; for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* Rev. v. 9. *Theſe are they which were redeemed from the earth, and from among men, as firſt-fruits unto God and the Lamb.*— Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

Thus

Thus you see that taking the word Redemption in a lax improper sense, as signifying deliverance, though without a price, that we may be said to be bought or redeemed by Jesus Christ. But if we take the word in a strict and proper sense, it signifies a particular kind of deliverance; namely, by the payment of a price. And it is in this way that Jesus redeemed his people. *He gave himself*, says St. Paul, *a ransom for all.* 1 Tim. ii. 6. And himself has told us, *the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.* Matt. xx. 28. Now a ransom is a price paid to redeem a thing that was forfeited, or a person that was held in captivity and slavery. So to redeem an estate, is to pay a price equivalent to it, and so to recover it. To redeem a prisoner or a captive, is to lay down a price as an equivalent for his liberty. In this sense Christ bought his people with a price, or redeemed them with his blood as the ransom. This will lead us to conceive of his work in our salvation in various views.

He is said *to redeem us to God by his blood.* Rev. v. 9. This implies that we were lost to God, because justice required we should be given up to punishment, and God could take no pleasure in us. We were lost to God, just as a criminal delivered up to justice is lost to his family and his country. But Jesus pays the ransom to divine justice with his own blood; that is, he bears the punishment in his own person, which justice demanded of the sinner; and hereupon the poor, helpless, lost sinner is recovered to God, becomes his property again upon the footing of mercy, and recovers the divine favour which he had lost. The blessed God, as it were, recovers his lost creature, receives him with delight from the arrest of justice safe and unhurt, and rejoices over him as redeemed from eternal death. Now, like the Father of the prodigal in the parable, he gives orders for public rejoicings through all the heavenly court, saying, *It is meet we should make merry and be glad, for this my Son was*

dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found. Luke xv. 32. And again, *I will ſave him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ranſom.* Job xxxiii. 24. Again, Jeſus is ſaid to redeem us from the curſe of the law: *God ſent forth his Son—made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.* Gal. iv. 4, 5. *Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us.* Gal. iii. 13. Here you ſee what he redeemed us from, namely, the curſe of the law, the penalty threatened in the law to diſobedience; and alſo the manner in which he redeemed us, namely, by becoming a curſe for us, or ſuffering the penalty in his own perſon which was due to us for diſobedience. This repreſentation ſuppoſes that the law of God has demands upon us, demands of puniſhment, and that it detains us as priſoners under arreſt till theſe demands are anſwered by ſome adequate ſatisfaction. Now the Lord Jeſus entered into our law-place, and by his ſufferings made a ſatisfaction equivalent to the demands of the law: and it is this ſatisfaction that is called the ranſom by which he redeemed us. By his obedience and ſufferings all the demands of the law are completely anſwered, ſo that now the priſoner is diſmiſſed, the captive ſet free; ſet free upon the footing of a ranſom, or for and in conſideration of full payment made. By this a way is opened for the ſalvation of ſinners upon the plan of the goſpel; that is, by the righteouſneſs of Jeſus imputed to them upon their believing in him; imputed to ſuch as have no perſonal merit, but muſt ſink into everlaſting condemnation, if dealt with according to the rigour of the law. Thus Jeſus is made to believers righteouſneſs and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. righteouſneſs to anſwer the precept of the law, and redemption from its penalty.

In ſhort, our ſalvation is accompliſhed ſo much in the way of redemption, that this word, or one of the ſame ſenſe, is very often uſed in the affair. Heaven is called a purchaſed * poſſeſſion, Epheſ. i. 14. becauſe,

* *periporeſeos.*

cauſe, when we had forfeited our right to it, it was purchaſed for us by the blood of Chriſt. Believers are called a peculiar, 1 Peter ii. 9. or as the word is ſometimes rendered, a purchaſed † people. The reſurrection is called the redemption of our body, Rom. viii. 23. becauſe, after having been made a helpleſs captive under the power of death, and ſhut up in the priſon of the grave, it is diſmiſſed and ſet at liberty by Jeſus Chriſt. And our ſalvation is called eternal redemption, becauſe all the bleſſings contained therein are redeemed for us after they had been forfeited and loſt.

Thus you ſee the death of Chriſt may be called the great price with which we are bought, and by which all ſpiritual and everlaſting bleſſings were bought for us. As for believers, it is beyond all diſpute that they have been thus dearly bought; and on this account they are not their own, but God's. They are his on the footing of redemption; and therefore he has the ſtrongeſt claim to their ſervice. O! ſhall not thoſe favoured creatures whom he has redeemed from hell, redeemed from ſin and Satan, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, devote themſelves to their Deliverer as his ſervants for ever? Can you bear the thought of withholding his own from him, when he redeemed you when loſt, and purchaſed a right to you by the blood of his Son? one drop of which is of more value than a thouſand worlds!

A thouſand worlds ſo bought, were bought too dear.

Muſt not the love of Chriſt conſtrain you, as it did St. Paul, to judge thus: That if this illuſtrious Perſonage *died for you, then you that live ſhould no longer live to yourſelves, but to him that died for you and roſe again.* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Thus you ſee the argument concludes with full force as to believers, who are indiſputably purchaſed by the blood of Chriſt. But will it conclude alſo as to

† *laus eis peripoieſn.*

to thoſe who are now unbelievers? Were they ſo redeemed or bought by Jeſus Chriſt that they are no longer their own but God's, and upon that footing obliged to devote themſelves to him? There is hardly any ſubject in divinity more intricate than the extent of Chriſt's redemption; and it would by no means ſuit the preſent occaſion, to perplex a practical diſcourſe with this controverſy. I ſhall therefore only lay down a few principles which are indiſputable, and will fully anſwer my preſent deſign. (1.) As to thoſe who believe that Chriſt laid down his life as a price for the redemption of every individual of mankind, the argument concludes with full force; for by their own confeſſion they are bought with a price, and therefore they are not their own, but God's. (2.) You all hope that Jeſus Chriſt died for you; unleſs you have this hope, you can have no hope at all of being ſaved according to the goſpel; for the goſpel allows you no hopes of ſalvation at all, but upon the ſuppoſition of Chriſt's dying for you. Have you then any hope of ſalvation? Undoubtedly you have; for you do not look upon yourſelves as ſhut up under remedileſs deſpair. Well then, juſt as much hope as you have of ſalvation, juſt ſo much hope you have that Chriſt died for you; and conſequently, upon your own principle, you are ſo far obliged to act as perſons bought with a price, and therefore not your own but God's, that is, as far as you hope for heaven, ſo far you are obliged to devote yourſelves to God as his, and no longer to live to yourſelves. And if you deny his claim to you upon the footing of redemption, you renounce all hope, and give yourſelves over as loſt and hopeleſs. And what can bind you more ſtrongly than this? Will you rather ruſh into deſpair, and fling yourſelves headlong into ruin, than acknowledge God's right, and behave as thoſe that are his, and not your own? (3.) I venture to aſſert that Chriſt died for every man in ſuch a ſenſe, as to warrant all that hear the goſpel to regard the offer of ſalvation

ſalvation by his death, as made to them without diſtinction; and to oblige all indefinitely to embrace that offer, or to believe in him, and to conduct themſelves towards him, as one that by his death placed them under a diſpenſation of grace. Therefore all are obliged to behave towards him as their Redeemer, and to own that he has a right to them upon the footing of redemption. This is ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe: for if this be the caſe, then I may enter a claim to you all, in the name of God, as his property; and you cannot refuſe to reſign yourſelves to him without denying the Lord that bought you. He claims your ſouls and bodies as his due, and requires you to glorify him with both, upon the footing of redemption.

Here I am naturally led to conſider the duty the apoſtle infers from theſe premiſes; and that is, to glorify God. *Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price;* your ſouls and your bodies are God's; *therefore glorify God with your ſouls and your bodies, which are his.* This is the connection of the apoſtle's reaſoning.

Here you are ready to inquire, What is it to glorify God with our ſouls and bodies? I anſwer in ſhort, The connection intimates that it conſiſts in uſing our ſouls and bodies, and all that we are and poſſeſs, not as our own, but as his; that is, that we ſerve him with all the powers of both. We ſhould conſider our underſtandings as his, and therefore employ them to think of him and know him: our wills as his, and therefore chuſe him: our love, our deſire, our joy as his, and therefore love, deſire, and rejoice in him above all: our ſorrow, our indignation, and all the various forms of our iraſcible paſſions as his, and therefore level them againſt his enemies, particularly againſt ſin: our conſciences as his, and therefore regard them as his deputies; our powers of action as his, and therefore to be governed by his authority. We ſhould conſider our whole ſouls as his, and therefore not willingly harbour any thing in them that may

may displease him; no chosen darkness, vanity, or error in the mind: no enmity, no coldness, or lukewarmness in the heart. We should love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; because our hearts, our souls, our minds, and strength are his; his, and not our own. So also our bodies are his, and therefore all our members should be instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Your eyes are his, therefore let them glorify him by viewing the wonders of his word and works. Your ears are his, therefore let them hear his voice. Your tongues are his, therefore use them as instruments of praise, and of making known his glory. In short, you are all entirely his, therefore be all entirely devoted to him. You are his servants, even when you are serving yourselves; therefore whatsoever ye do, even in your own affairs, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not to men. This is to *glorify God with your souls and bodies, which are his.* And this should be your universal practice in all your actions: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether you live, you should live to the Lord; and whether you die, you should die to the Lord; that living and dying you may be the Lord's.* Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

You have now had a brief view of those grounds upon which Jehovah claims you as his, and of the duty resulting from this claim. And what remains but that I wind up the whole with a serious, plain, warm proposal to your hearts? And that is, whether you will this day practically acknowledge God's right in you, by devoting yourselves entirely to him? Will you, or will you not? Pause, and think upon the proposal. Perhaps you may be willing to comply without any farther excitements. If not, come, and let us reason the matter together.

Consider how entirely, and how long you have unjustly detained his own property from God. Have you not lived to yourselves, and not to him? Have you

you not used the faculties of your souls, and the members of your bodies, your time, your estates, and your all, as if he had no right in them, but they were entirely your own? Has not *self* been the ruling principle in you, as if you had no Master in heaven; or as if no blood had been shed upon Mount Calvary to purchase a superior right in you? You have thought your own thoughts, spoke your own words, consulted your own pleasure, and followed your own will; as if you usurped the disposal of yourselves, and did not acknowledge a superior. When were your thoughts, your words, your time, your powers of action, devoted to the Lord that bought you? The patience of God has lent some of you many days and years, but which of them have you used for his glory? And is it not high time for you now to return to your rightful Master, and to *render to God the things that are God's?*

Again, Consider, that while you have thus lived to yourselves, you have most unjustly usurped a right to what was not your own. Did you make yourselves? Did you redeem yourselves? Have you preserved yourselves? Is it you that gave the least virtue to the food to nourish you? Can you enable the earth to support you, or the air to heave your lungs with the breath of life? Can you recover yourselves when sick, or revive yourselves when dying? Can you make yourselves happy in the world of spirits, and provide for yourselves through an immortal duration? If you can do these things, you may set up for independency with a better grace, and call yourselves your own; and you may boldly lift up your faces to heaven, and tell the Sovereign of the universe you will not be obliged to him, but he may take away from you all that is his, and leave you to shift for yourselves. But are you not struck with horror at such claims as these? You must then acknowledge you are not your own. And what aggravated sacrilege have you been guilty of, in robbing God of his right? If he that robs you

of

of a little money is punished with death for the crime, what do you deserve who have robbed God of your souls and bodies, and that all your life long? O! will you not this day restore him his own? He will accept it again, when freely restored, though abused, dishonoured, and rendered unfit for service by you.

Farther, If you will not give up yourselves to God, pray what will you do with yourselves? You are not capable of self-subsistence, or independency. A newborn, naked, helpless infant may as well refuse the breast, reject the mother's care, and set up for itself, as you pretend to shift for yourselves independently of the God that made you, and the Saviour that redeemed you. Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die and putrify. If you will not give up yourselves to God, whom will you choose for your patron? Will you yield yourselves to sin and Satan? Alas! that is but to submit to a mercileſs tyrant, who will employ you in sordid, cruel drudgery, and then reward you with death and destruction. Will you give up yourselves to the world, to riches, honours, and pleasures? Alas! what service can the world do you when it is laid in ashes by the universal flames of the last conflagration? What service can the world do you when your unwilling souls are torn away from it, and must leave all its enjoyments for ever and ever? Will not the God of grace prove a better Master to you? Has he ever forsaken any of his servants in their last extremity? No; he has promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. 5. And the long train of his servants, through thousands of years, bear an united testimony, that they have always found him faithful to his promise. And why then will you not choose him for your Master? Alas! if you refuse, you become what I may call the lumber and rubbish of the universe; useless to yourselves, and lost to God and

and your fellow-creatures, a property not worth owning. Will you call yourſelves your own you degrade yourſelves, and loſe all your dignity and importance; you cut yourſelves off from all happineſs, and can expect no other heaven than what ſuch guilty, helpleſs creatures as you can create for yourſelves. If you will not voluntarily ſurrender yourſelves to God, he will not own you as his, but leave you to yourſelves, to ſhift for yourſelves as you can. *He will hide his face from you, according to his threatning, that he may ſee what will be your end.* Deut. xxxii. 19, 20. And, O! what wretched outcaſts, what poor helpleſs orphans will you then be!

Let me farther try whether you have the leaſt ſpark of gratitude ſtill remaining in you. Has the love of Jeſus no ſweetly-conſtraining force upon you? Can you look upon him dying for you on the croſs, and yet keep him out of his right? Can you view him paying your ranſom with his blood and life, and yet refuſe to give him up what he has redeemed at ſo high a price? ſhall poor captives, redeemed from ſin and hell with the blood of Jeſus, rather continue ſtill in bondage than ſubmit to ſo good a Maſter? Are you capable of ſuch baſe ingratitude? Can you treat your kind Redeemer ſo unkindly?

Let me conclude this exhortation with the more forcible, though plain and artleſs language of another.* *Conſider when judgment comes, inquiry will be made, whether you have lived as your own, or as his that bought you. Then he will require his own with improvement.* Luke xix. 23. 'The great buſineſs of that day will not be ſo much to ſearch after particular ſins or duties, which were contrary to the ſcope of heart and life, but whether you lived to God, or to your fleſh? and whether your time, and care, and wealth were expended for Chriſt in his members and intereſt, or for your carnal ſelves? You that Chriſt hath given authority to ſhall then be accountable,

* Mr. Baxter's Practical Works, Vol. iv. p. 714, 715.

whether you improved it to his advantage. You that he hath given honour to, must then give account whether you improved it to his honour. In the fear of God, sirs, cast up your accounts in time, and bethink you what answer will then stand good. It will be a doleful hearing to a guilty soul, when Christ shall say, I gave thee thirty or forty years time; thy flesh had so much in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and labouring; in idleness and vain talking, and recreations, and other vanities; but where was my part? How much was laid out for promoting my glory? I lent you much of the wealth of the world: so much was spent in provisions for your backs and bellies; so much on costly toys, or superfluities; so much in revengeful suits and contentions: and so much was left behind for your posterity; but where was my part? How much was laid out for the furtherance of the gospel, or to relieve the souls or the bodies of your brethren? I gave thee a family, and committed them to thy care to govern them for me; but how didst thou perform it? O! brethren, bethink you in time what answer to make to such questions. Your Judge hath told you that your doom must then pass according as you have improved your talents for him; and that he that hideth his talent, though he give God his own, *shall be cast into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Matt. xxv. 30. How easily will Christ then evince his right in you, and convince you that it was your duty to have lived to him! Do you think, sirs, that you shall then have the face to say, I thought, Lord, I had been made and redeemed for myself? I thought I had nothing to do on earth but live in as much plenty as I could, and pleasure to myself, and serve thee on the by, that thou mightest continue my prosperity, and save me when I could keep the world no longer: I knew not that I was thine, and should have lived to thy glory?—If any of you plead thus, what store of arguments hath Christ to silence you! He will

will then convince you that his title to you was not queſtionable. He will prove that thou waſt his by thy very being, and fetch unanſwerable arguments from every part and faculty: he will prove it from his incarnation, his life of humiliation, his bloody ſweat, his crown of thorns, his croſs, his grave: he that had wounds to ſhew after his reſurrection for the ſatisfaction of a doubting diſciple, will have ſuch ſcars to ſhew then as ſhall ſuffice to convince a ſelf-excuſing rebel: all theſe ſhall witneſs that he was thy rightful Lord.'

And now, my brethren, may I not preſume that I have carried my point, if I had only to do with your reaſon? Does not your reaſon plead in favour of reſigning yourſelves to God this day? Take notice, I again proclaim God's right in you. Can any of you deny this claim? Certainly you dare not. Well then, let heaven and earth bear witneſs, that you were all claimed this day as God's property upon the footing of redemption; and not one of you dared to deny it. Therefore, *render to God the things that are God's.* May I hope you now feel your hearts beginning to yield? I make the propoſal to you all; to you maſters and freemen, as well as to you ſlaves: ſhall we all this day, with one conſent, devote ourſelves to God as his ſervants? Will you allow me, as it were, to draw up your indenture, and ſpeak for you? I hope I am willing to lead the way, and will you follow me? Methinks I hear you ſay, 'Yes, we are willing: after many ſtruggles and reluctances, we are at length willing, and can hold out no longer.' But hold! I am afraid ſome of you know not what you are going about. And if you raſhly and inconſiderately engage in the ſervice, you will ſoon deſert it. As ſoon as the force of perſuaſion has ceaſed, and the flow of paſſion is over, you will retract all. Therefore I muſt put you back, till I inform you of ſome things with relation to this contract, that you may make ſure work an everlaſting covenant, never to be forgotten. Take

Take notice then, 1. Your reſignation of yourſelves muſt not be the act of mere nature, without much greater aſſiſtance; but you muſt be urged and ſweetly conſtrained to it by the holy Spirit, making you willing by his power. Whatever profeſſions you may make, whatever external forms of ſelf-dedication you may force yourſelves to uſe, yet your hearts are by no means willing; nay, they are utterly averſe to this ſurrender, till they are changed by divine grace. This indeed ſhould not diſcourage you from making the attempt; for it is while you are making the attempt, you are to hope for the aſſiſtance of divine grace. But I mention the neceſſity of divine power, leſt you ſhould miſtake the efforts of mere nature under the conſtraints of perſuaſion, or in a warm fit of paſſion, for an hearty voluntary ſurrender of yourſelves to God. The ſame thing is to be applied to your future performance of your engagement. As you cannot of yourſelves rightly devote yourſelves to God, neither will you be able of yourſelves to perform your vow. Therefore be humble and ſelf-diffident in this tranſaction. Entertain no ſanguine expectations from yourſelves, or you will be ſurely diſappointed. Truſt in divine ſtrength for all, for that alone is ſufficient for you.

2. Your reſignation muſt be unreſerved and univerſal. God claims your all; Jeſus bought all; your ſouls and bodies, and whatever belongs to you, and therefore you muſt give him all. He will not ſhare his property with ſin and Satan: you muſt make no reſerve of this or that favourite luſt or intereſt, but part with all that is inconſiſtent with your duty to him: and you muſt give up what is deareſt to you to your heavenly Maſter, to be diſpoſed of as he ſhall think proper. Here pauſe, and inquire whether you are willing to be unreſerved and univerſal in your ſurrender?

3. You muſt reſign yourſelves to God at all adventures, reſolving to be his whatever your attachment to

to him may coſt you; though it ſhould coſt you your reputation among men, a part, or even the whole of your eſtate; nay, though it ſhould coſt you your life. Bleſſed be God, we are now in ſuch happy circumſtances, that our duty to him is not likely to do us much injury even in this world, where perſecution and tribulation is the uſual lot of his ſervants. Reſignation to him may indeed expoſe you to a ſenſeleſs laugh or a ſneer, to reviling and calumny; but who that has the ſpirit of a man within him would be ſo meanly complaiſant as to offend his God, and loſe his heaven, in order to ſhun the ridicule and contempt of fools? Fools they are, if tried by the ſtandard of true wiſdom, however wiſe they may be in other reſpects. This is but a ſlight kind of perſecution to one that makes a proper eſtimate of things, which cannot ſo much as make a finger ake, or raiſe the ſkin into a moment's pain. But times may yet change with us. The day may yet come when the ſervants of Chriſt among us may be called to forſake *father and mother, and wife and children, and lands, and even to lay down their lives for the ſake of Chriſt.* This would be no unuſual event; the ſervants of the crucified Jeſus have been a company of croſs-bearers, if I may ſo call them, from age to age; and their religion has coſt them dear in the eſtimate of the world, though they are always immenſe gainers by it in the iſſue. This perſecution, even to death, therefore you may perhaps meet with, and it is proper you ſhould inſert this article into the contract, that you will part with life for Chriſt's ſake. Perhaps your indulgent Maſter may not inſiſt upon it, and yet perhaps he may; it is therefore neceſſary you ſhould conſent to it. And what do you think of it? Does not this article cauſe ſome of you to draw back? Let me add,

4. Your dedication of yourſelves muſt be fixed and habitual. It is not a formality to be performed only at a ſacramental occaſion, nor a warm tranſient purpoſe under a ſermon, or in a tranſport of paſſion; but

but it muſt be the ſteady, uniform, perſevering diſpoſition of your ſouls to be the Lord's at all times, and in all circumſtances, in life, in death, and through all eternity.

Theſe, brethren, are the qualifications of an acceptable ſurrender of yourſelves to God; and are you willing to be his upon theſe terms? Or will you refuſe and periſh? Deliberate upon the matter, and come to ſome concluſion. *Chooſe ye in this day whom ye will ſerve.* May I hope you anſwer me to this purpoſe: 'We have weighed the caſe impartially; we ſee difficulties before us, if we become the Lord's ſervants; but notwithſtanding theſe difficulties, we are reſolved upon it: his we will be who bought us with his blood.' Is this your determinate reſolution, my dear brethren? Then make the tranſaction as ſolemn and explicit as you can, and follow me; I ſay, let all, white and black, old and young, follow me, while I ſpeak for you; 'Lord, here is a poor ſinner, thy creature, redeemed by the blood of thy Son, that has long been a ſlave to other maſters, and withheld from thee thy juſt and dear-bought property; here, Lord, I would now, freely and without reſerve, devote and ſurrender myſelf, my ſoul and body, and my all to thee, to be univerſally and for ever thine. And let the omnipotent God, let angels and men, be witneſs to the engagement.'

Do you, my dear brethren, heartily conſent to this formula? Then the contract is ready for ſealing; therefore let us riſe and crowd round the table of our Lord, and there annex our ſolemn ſeals, and acknowledge it as our act and deed. O! happy day! if we ſhould be prepared to uſe this ſacred ordinance for this purpoſe! Come, ye ſervants of the Lord, take a refreſhment to ſtrengthen you for your Maſter's work. Come, ye redeemed ſlaves, commemorate the price of your redemption. Come, ſee how your Maſter loved you, and how much he ſuffered for you: and O! let his love conſtrain you to live not

not to yourſelves, but to him that died for you and roſe again; roſe again to plead your cauſe, and prepare a place for you in heaven, the region of immortal life and glory!

But if any of you refuſe to comply with the propoſal, or, which is much the ſame, are careleſs and indifferent about giving yourſelves up to God, not forming any expreſs determination one way or other, heaven and earth will bear witneſs againſt you, that your refuſal is not owing to your not knowing God's claim upon you. I have aſſerted it this day, in the preſence of God and his people; and if you ſtill refuſe to acknowledge it, I denounce unto you that you ſhall ſurely periſh, ſhall periſh by the hand of divine juſtice as wilful rebels againſt the higheſt authority, and as inſolently and ungratefully *denying the Lord that bought them.* Think on your dreadful doom, and let your hearts meditate terror, till you be delivered from it by a voluntary ſurrender of yourſelves to God, through Jeſus Chriſt your Redeemer. And now what account could ſuch of you as have refuſed your compliance give of the tranſactions of this day, even to one of your fellow-creatures? Suppoſe one ſhould aſk you upon your return home, 'What were you doing to-day?' You muſt anſwer, "I was engaged in a treaty with the Proprietor of the univerſe, and the Redeemer that bought me with his blood, about becoming his ſervant, and acknowledging his right in me."—'Well, and what was the iſſue? Certainly you did not dare to refuſe? certainly you are now the willing ſervant of God.'—"No, I refuſed, and ſo the treaty broke up."—O thou monſter! Could you bear the dreadful narrative? Would not every one that heard it gaze and ſtare at you with horror, and aſk in conſternation, 'Were you not afraid? Had you no regard for your own welfare? Alas! what will you do with yourſelf now? What rock or mountain can you find to hide your devoted head? How will you anſwer for your refuſal in the great and terrible day of the Lord?'

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

THE CHRISTIAN FEAST.

1 Cor. v. 8. *Therefore let us keep the feaſt, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs, but with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth.*

AS we have the agreeable proſpect of celebrating the Lord's ſupper on the next Lord's day, we cannot ſpend this day to better purpoſe than preparing for it. And no preparative can be of more importance than a right knowledge of the end and deſign of that ſolemn ordinance, and the qualifications neceſſary in thoſe that would worthily partake of it. To this I would devote the preſent diſcourſe: and ſo important a deſign certainly demands the attention of all, eſpecially of ſuch of you as intend to join in the participation of the ſacred ſupper.

Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude, yet it is juſtly ſuppoſed to have a particular reference to this inſtitution, which has the ſame place under the goſpel-diſpenſation which the paſſover had under the law. St. Paul had very naturally glided into the ſtile of the Jewiſh law concerning the paſchal ſupper, in the directions he had given concerning a ſcandalous member of the Corinthian church: and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity, when he comes to ſpeak of the goſpel-diſpenſation, and particularly of the Lord's ſupper. He had directed the church of Corinth to caſt the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, becauſe if they ſhould tolerate ſuch a corrupt member among them, it would tend to corrupt the whole ſociety.

ſociety. Wickedneſs is of a ſpreading infectious nature, and the indulgence of it in one inſtance may occaſion extenſive miſchief; for, ſays he, *Know ye not that leaven* ferments and diffuſes itſelf, till at length it has *leavened the whole lump?* Juſt ſo one corrupt member in a church may ſpread a contagion through the whole. *Therefore purge out the old leaven;* caſt out this ſcandalous offender, and labour alſo to purge your church and your own hearts from all corruption, that ye may be as a new, ſolid, and pure lump; for ye are more ſtrongly bound to keep yourſelves morally pure, and to guard your church againſt infection, than the Jews were to abſtain from all things mixed with leaven at the feaſt of the paſſover; for though that feaſt is no more to be obſerved, yet that which was ſignified by the paſchal lamb is now come to paſs; *Chriſt our paſſover is ſacrificed for us*, and the ordinance of his ſupper is appointed as a ſacred feaſt, in commemoration of him, and our deliverance by him, as the paſſover was commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt, and the deſtroying-angel. And this is a ſtronger reaſon for the more purity of particular perſons and congregations under the goſpel, than there could be for ceremonial purity under the law. *Therefore*, ſays he, *let us keep this evangelical feaſt, not with old leaven*, not with thoſe corrupt diſpoſitions which we once indulged, and which, like leaven, ſoured our nature, and fermented through our frame: *neither with the leaven of malice, or any kind of wickedneſs;* but renouncing our old temper and practice, and with hearts univerſally ſanctified, and full of love and good will to all mankind, let us religiouſly celebrate this goſpel feaſt with thoſe diſpoſitions which were ſignified by the unleavened bread, namely, *ſincerity and truth.*

It was the practice of the Jews, when the paſſover was approaching, to ſearch every corner of their houſes with lighted candles, that they might be ſure there was no leaven to be found under their roofs. The apoſtle probably alludes to that practice, and exhorts

chriſtians to a like care in ſearching and purging their hearts, and the churches to which they belong, that they may be pure, and fit for partaking of ſo holy an ordinance.

My deſign is to ſhew you the principal ends of the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper; and as I go along, to delineate the character of thoſe who are fit to attend upon it; for by knowing the former, we may eaſily know the latter.

The Lord's ſupper partakes of the general nature of thoſe divine inſtitutions which are called ſacraments: in this, 'That it is intended to repreſent things ſpiritual by material emblems or ſigns which affect our ſenſes, and thereby enlarge our ideas, and impreſs our hearts in the preſent ſtate of fleſh and blood.' As we have not only rational minds, but alſo animal bodies endowed with ſenſes, God has wiſely adapted his inſtitutions to the make of human nature, and called in the aſſiſtance of our eyes * and our ears to help our conceptions of divine things, and to affect our minds with them. And this method is agreeable to the nature of makind; God has been pleaſed to uſe it in every age, and under every diſpenſation of religion. The tree of life was the ſacrament of the firſt covenant; a ſenſible confirmation to Adam that he ſhould obtain eternal life by his obedience. The rainbow was appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with Noah, that the world ſhould no more periſh by a deluge; and we have not only the aſſurance of the divine promiſe, but we may receive the confirmation through our eyes by beholding that illuſtrious ſign in the clouds. Circumciſion and the paſſover were noted ſacraments of the covenant of grace, under the Jewiſh diſpenſation; and Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper are appointed in their room, and anſwer the like ends under the goſpel. In all theſe ordinances God conſults our weakneſs, and, as I obſerved,

* Segnius irritant animos demiſſa per aurem,
Quam quæ ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus. HOR.

ſerved, makes our bodily ſenſes helpful to the devotions of our minds. Indeed this method of repreſenting and confirming things by ſenſible ſigns and ſignificant actions is ſo natural and expreſſive, that men have uſed it in all ages in their tranſactions with one another. It was remarkably in uſe among the antients; and it is not quite laid aſide in our age, which does not abound in ſuch methods of repreſentation. In our age and country it is uſual to confirm contracts by annexing ſeals to an inſtrument of writing; to confirm an agreement by ſhaking hands; to ſignify love by a kiſs, and complaiſance by bowing; and we ſometimes give ſome token as a memorial to a parting friend. I mention theſe low and familiar inſtances that I may, if poſſible, give ſome juſt ideas of a ſacrament to the meaneſt capacity. It partakes of the general nature of theſe ſignificant ſigns and actions, and is intended, like them, to ſtrike our ſenſes; and through that medium to inſtruct or affect our minds: and ſuch a ſign, ſuch a ſeal, ſuch a ſignificant action is the Lord's ſupper in particular.

Having made this remark upon its general nature, I now go on to ſhew the particular ends of its inſtitution. And,

I. This ordinance was intended as a memorial of the ſufferings of Chriſt for his people.

That this is its immediate and principal deſign we learn from the words of the bleſſed Jeſus at its firſt inſtitution, *This do in remembrance of me.* That we are to remember him particularly and principally as ſuffering for our ſins, is evident from his words in diſtributing the elements, *This is my body which is broken for you.* Here a moving emphaſis is laid upon his body's being broken; broken, cruſhed, and mangled with an endleſs variety of ſufferings. So again, *This cup is the New Teſtament in my blood, which is ſhed for you.* Hence it is evident this ordinance was appointed as a memorial of a ſuffering Saviour; and it is under this notion that we are particularly to remember

member him. We are to *ſhew forth the Lord's death*, ſays the apoſtle; his death, which was the conſummation of his ſufferings, *till he come again* to viſit our world in a very different and glorious manner.

The Lord's ſupper in this view is to be looked upon as a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they ſee it they may remember him. Our Lord knew we ſhould be very apt to forget him; and therefore, that the memory of his ſufferings might never be loſt, he inſtituted this ordinance; and by the humble elements of bread and wine, he repreſents himſelf to our ſenſes as broken under the burden of his ſufferings, and ſhedding his blood. Corn, out of which bread is made, which is firſt threſhed, then ground in a mill, then baked in an oven, is a very proper emblem to ſignify the violences which our Lord's ſacred body endured; and wine, preſſed from the grape, and poured into the cup, is a ſtriking repreſentation of his blood, which was forced from him by the cruſhing weight of his agonies. Therefore there was a peculiar propriety in appointing theſe elements to be the memorials of his ſufferings.

This remembrance of a ſuffering Saviour muſt be attended with ſuitable affections. To remember him with a careleſs indifferency, or with contempt, is the moſt ungrateful inſult. Were he an inſignificant perſon, in whom we have no concern, we might treat him thus; but thus to treat the beloved Son of God, and our only Saviour, thus to requite all his love and ſufferings for us, what can be more ſhocking? What can be more baſe ingratitude? We ſhould therefore remember him in this ordinance with a penitent ſenſe of our ſins, which were the cauſes of his death; with an ardent love and gratitude for his dying love to us; with an humble faith and confidence in the merit of his death, to procure us acceptance with God; and with a voluntary dedication of ourſelves to him and his ſervice for ever.

And

And hence you may learn the character of thoſe who are prepared to communicate in this feaſt. They, and only they, are prepared, who are true penitents, fully convinced of their ſins, and deeply ſenſible of their malignity, eſpecially as the cauſes of his death, and thoroughly determined to forſake them; who are lovers of a crucified Jeſus, and feel their hearts fired with gratitude to him for all his love; who are ſenſible that they have no perſonal righteouſneſs, and therefore place all their dependance upon his only; who feel his love conſtraining them, and are determined to *live no more to themſelves, but to him that died for them, and roſe again.*

Self-examination is a neceſſary preparative to this ordinance. *Let a man examine himſelf*, ſays the apoſtle, *and ſo let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup.* Therefore, my brethren, inquire whether this be your character; if it be not, you have no right to this privilege. It is a ſhocking incongruity to pretend to commemorate the death of Chriſt without love to him, or penitential ſorrows for thoſe ſins for which he died. Memorials of friendſhip and love-tokens are only for friends; and when others uſe them, it is mere farce and hypocriſy. Therefore till you have theſe diſpoſitions, do not adventure to come to his table.

II. The Lord's ſupper was appointed as a badge of our chriſtian profeſſion, and of our being the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt.

Baptiſm is appointed for our initiation into the chriſtian church at our firſt aſſuming the chriſtian profeſſion: and by partaking of this ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, we declare our conſtancy in that profeſſion, and that we do not repent of our choice, nor deſire to change our Maſter. We openly profeſs that we are not aſhamed of the croſs, or the religion of the deſpiſed Nazarene, but publicly avow our relation to him before the world. This perhaps may be intended by that expreſſion of St. Paul, *ſhewing forth the*

the Lord's death. We ſhew, profeſs, and publiſh to all the world the regard we have even to his ignominious death. We may look upon this ordinance as an oath of allegiance to Jeſus Chriſt. And hence probably it was firſt called [*ſacramentum*] a ſacrament; which properly ſignifies an oath, * and particularly that kind of oath which the Roman ſoldiers took to their generals, in which they engaged to be faithful to their leaders, and to fight for their country, and never deſert its cauſe.

To this practice probably St. Auguſtine, about fourteen hundred years ago, refers, as well known to his hearers, when he addreſſes them thus: 'Ye know, my beloved, that the ſoldiers of this world, who receivd but temporal rewards from temporal maſters, do firſt bind themſelves by military ſacraments or oaths, and profeſs that they will be faithful to their commanders; how much more then ought the ſoldiers of the eternal King, who ſhall receive eternal rewards, to bind themſelves with the heavenly ſacraments or oaths, and publicly profeſs their fidelity to him!' †

Now if we receive the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper in this view, we aſſume a badge or mark of diſtinction from the reſt of the world, and openly profeſs ourſelves his diſciples. We take a ſolemn oath of allegiance to him, and ſwear that we will be his faithful ſervants and ſoldiers to the end of life.

This ſhews the peculiar propriety of this ordinance as following upon baptiſm, eſpecially with regard to thoſe that were baptized in infancy, as we have generally

* So Horace uſes it:

—— Non ego perfidum
Dixi Sacramentum,

† Notum eſt, Dilectiſſimi, charitati veſtræ quod milites ſeculi beneficia temporalia a temporalibus Dominis accepturi, prius Sacramentis militaribus obligantur, & Dominis ſuis fidem ſe ſervaturos profitentur: quanto magis ergo æterno Regi militaturi, & æterna præmia percepturi, debent Sacramentis cœleſtibus obligari, & fidem per quam ei placituri ſunt, publice profiteri? AUGUST. Oper. Tom. x. p. 984.

nerally been. In baptiſm our parents offered us up to God as his ſervants, and members of the chriſtian church, before we were capable of perſonal choice, or doing any thing for ourſelves; and when we arrive to years of diſcretion, it is expected we ſhould approve of what they did by our own perſonal act. Now the Lord's ſupper is an inſtitution in which we may make their act our own, and acknowledge that we may ſtand to the contract they made for us. And as often as we partake of it, ſo often we make this profeſſion. And hence by the way, you may ſee that ſuch who neglect this ordinance when they are grown up to a capacity of acting for themſelves, do virtually renounce their baptiſm and diſown the act of their parents in devoting them to God. Their parents were to act for them no longer than while they were incapable to act for themſelves; and now when they are arrived at that age, and refuſe to confirm the act of their parents, they practically diſown it, and wilfully make heathens of themſelves: and conſequently they proclaim themſelves rebels againſt Chriſt; for what but rebels are we to account ſuch who refuſe the oath of allegiance when tendered to them, and that over and over?

From hence you may learn another qualification of an acceptable communicant, namely, an hearty willingneſs to renounce his luſts and pleaſures, and every ſin, and to become univerſally and eternally the devoted ſervant and diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt. Here again examine yourſelves whether you have this qualification.

III. We may conſider this ordinance of the Lord's ſupper as a ſeal of the covenant of grace, both upon God's part and upon ours.

Every ſacramental inſtitution ſeems to partake of the general nature of a ſeal; that is, it is a ſenſible ſign for the confirmation of a covenant or contract. This St. Paul expreſly aſſerts with regard to circumciſion, when he ſays, that *Abraham received the ſign of circumciſion*,

circumciſion, a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith. Rom. iv. 11. And Chriſt aſſerts the ſame thing concerning the ordinance now under conſideration: *This cup*, ſays he, *is the New Teſtament*, or covenant *in my blood;* that is, it is a ratifying ſign or ſeal of the covenant of grace, which is founded in my blood.

That you may rightly underſtand this, you muſt obſerve that God has caſt his diſpenſation towards our guilty world into the form of a covenant, or contract, in which God and man are the parties, and Chriſt is the Mediator between them. The tenor of the covenant on God's part is to this purpoſe, 'That he will graciouſly beſtow for the ſake of Chriſt, pardon of ſin, eternal life, and all the bleſſings of his purchaſe, upon all ſuch ſinners of the race of man as comply with the terms on which theſe bleſſings are offered.' The tenor or terms upon our part are to this purpoſe, 'That we receive and ſubmit to the Lord Jeſus as our only Saviour and Lord; or, in other words, that we believe in him with all our hearts, and repent of our ſins, and devote ourſelves to his ſervice.' This is the ſubſtance of that happy contract; and of this the Lord's ſupper is a ſeal, as to both parties.

On God's part this covenant can receive no intrinſic confirmation. He has plainly declared it in his word; and no oaths or confirming ſigns can add any intrinſic certainty to his declaration. We ſay, an honeſt man's word is as good as his oath, or bond and ſeal:' and ſurely we may apply this in the higheſt ſenſe to the declarations of eternal truth. But, though this covenant cannot be made more certain in itſelf on God's part, yet the evidence of its certainty may be made more ſenſible and affecting to poor creatures that are ſo ſlow of heart to believe. And hence God has been pleaſed, in condeſcenſion to our weakneſs, to confirm it with the moſt ſolemn oaths and ſacramental ſigns. This inſtitution, in particular, is a ſtanding evidence, obvious to our ſenſes, in all the ages of the

the chriſtian church, that he is unchangeably willing to ſtand to the articles on his part; that he is as ready to give his Son and all his bleſſings to ſuch as believe, as he is to give bread and wine as ſigns and ſeals of them.

As to our part, in receiving theſe elements, we ſignify our hearty conſent to the covenant of grace, and as it were, ſet our ſeal to it to confirm it. The language of that ſpeaking action is to this purpoſe; 'I cordially agree to the plan of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt revealed in the goſpel; and in token thereof I hereto affix my ſeal. As I take this bread and wine before many witneſſes, ſo I openly and avowedly take and receive the Lord Jeſus as my only Saviour and Lord, and the food and life of my ſoul: I cheerfully receive the offer of ſalvation according to the terms propoſed in the goſpel; of which let this bread and wine given and received be a token, or pledge, and ſeal.'

This, my brethren, is the meaning of this ſolemn action. And hence you may know whether you are qualified to join in it. If you have not heartily conſented to the contract, it is the greateſt abſurdity and diſſimulation to ſet your ſeal to it. What! will you, as it were, annex your hand and ſeal to a bargain that you do not agree to? Can you dare thus to be trifling with an heart-ſearching, all-knowing God? But, if divine grace has powerfully engaged your hearts to conſent to this agreement, come with humble boldneſs, and atteſt and ſeal it before men and angels. And remember, for your comfort, that on God's part it always ſtands firm and unalterable. You have his word, his hand-writing, his oath, his ſeal, to confirm your faith; and what can you deſire more to give you ſtrong conſolation!

IV. This ordinance of the Lord's ſupper was intended for the ſaints to hold communion together.

By the Communion of Saints, I mean that mutual love and charity, that reciprocal acknowledgment of

each other, that brotherly intercourſe and fellowſhip, which ſhould be cultivated among them as children of the ſame Father, in the ſame family, and as members of the ſame ſociety, or myſtical body. This is a thing of ſo much importance, that it is an article of the common Creed of the Chriſtian church.

Our ſitting down at the ſame table, partaking of the ſame elements, and commemorating the ſame Lord, are very expreſſive of this communion, and have a natural tendency to cultivate and cheriſh it. In ſuch a poſture we look like children of one family, fed at the ſame table upon the ſame ſpiritual proviſions. It is a ſignificant expreſſion, that we are one in heart and affection; that we have one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptiſm, one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, one God and Father of all; and that we acknowledge one another as brethren and fellow-chriſtians.*

Hence this ordinance has been frequently and juſtly called the communion. And St. Paul aſſures us it deſerves the name; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. *The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt?* that is, Is it not a token and pledge of our joint ſhare and communion in the bleſſings purchaſed by his blood? *The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt?* that is, Is it not a ſign of our common right to the happy effects of the ſufferings of his body? *For*, ſays he, *we being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread:* that is, 'As many grains make but 'one loaf of bread, and as many members make but 'one body, ſo we, being many, are, as it were, but 'one bread, and one ſacred body politic, of which 'Chriſt is the head; and our partaking together of 'one bread in the Lord's Supper, is a ſign and pledge 'of this union.' This appears ſtill clearer from the deſign

* The *agapæ*, or LOVE-FEASTS, among the primitive chriſtians, were intended ſtill farther to expreſs this brotherly love and communion; but as the practice was at length abuſed, it was laid aſide.

deſign of the apoſtle in theſe verſes, which was to caution the Corinthians againſt partaking with heathens in thoſe religious feaſts, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols, after they had offered their ſacrifice. This he repreſents as idolatrous. *My dearly beloved*, ſays he, *flee from idolatry*. ver. 14. And then, to convince them that in communicating with idolaters in theſe feaſts they really joined with them in their idolatry, he argues from the nature of the Lord's Supper, which is alſo a feaſt upon ſacrifice. *The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt?* So by joining with idolaters in theſe religious entertainments, we hold communion with them in their idolatry. He illuſtrates the ſame thing from the feaſts upon ſacrifice among the Jews, ver. 18.

Hence you may learn another qualification for this ordinance, namely, love and charity to all mankind, and eſpecially to our fellow-communicants. To ſit down at this feaſt of love with an heart poſſeſſed with angry and malicious paſſions, is certainly an aggravated wickedneſs. To theſe we may accommodate the words of Chriſt, though ſpoken before the inſtitution of this ordinance. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy ways; firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Matt. v. 23, 24.

Hence alſo you may learn that none but ſuch as make a credible profeſſion of the chriſtian religion have a right to this ordinance. If it be a ſign of the communion of ſaints, and if we ſhould love our fellow-communicants as ſaints, then it follows that they ſhould give us ſome ground for this charity, and that they ſhould, as far as we can judge, be real ſaints or true chriſtians. Their being ſuch in reality is neceſſary to give them a right in the ſight of God; and their appearing ſuch, in a judgment of charity, is neceſſary to give them a right in the ſight of the viſible

viſible church, which can only judge of an outward viſible profeſſion; therefore ſuch ought not to be admitted, however ſtrenuouſly they inſiſt that they are chriſtians, whoſe groſs ignorance, or wrong notions of religion, or whoſe immoral and irreligious practices leave no ground for a rational charity to hope that they are true chriſtians. How can we cultivate the communion of ſaints with ſuch who do not ſo much as appear to be ſaints? To have been baptized, to call themſelves chriſtians, and to attend upon the worſhip of the chriſtian church, and the like, is far from being ſufficient to conſtitute a credible profeſſion; for all this a man may do, and yet be farther from practical chriſtianity than an heathen. But a man muſt profeſs and act habitually in ſome meaſure as a chriſtian, before he can juſtly be looked upon as a chriſtian. Alas! the numbers of chriſtians in our land are generally of a very different character! They may call themſelves chriſtians, as you or I may call ourſelves kings or lords; but the profeſſion is ridiculous; and that charity is under no rational or ſcriptural limitations that can communicate with them as fellow-chriſtians.

V. In this ordinance God maintains communion with his people, and they with him.

This is a communion of a more divine and exalted kind than the former; and it is often mentioned in ſcripture as the privilege of the people of God. *Our fellowſhip*, ſays St. John, *is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt.* 1 John i. 3. *The communion of the Holy Ghoſt* is a part of the apoſtolical benediction, which we alſo uſe at the cloſe of our religious aſſemblies.

This communion conſiſts partly in that intercourſe which is carried on between God and his people, partly in the community of property, and partly in the interchange of property. There is a ſpiritual intercourſe carried on between him and them. He communicates his love and the influences of his ſpirit to them;

them; and they pour out their hearts, their deſires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their ſouls; and they draw near to him, and converſe with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worſhip. Hence he is ſaid to dwell in them, and to walk in them; 2 Cor. vi. 16. *And our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghoſt, in which he reſides.* 1 Cor. vi. 19. Chriſt ſpeaks of this mutual intercourſe in the ſtrongeſt terms; *If a man love me, my Father will love him, and I will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23. There is alſo a kind of community of goods between Chriſt and his people. They are children of the ſame Father, and he is not aſhamed to call them brethren; they are joint heirs of the ſame inheritance. They have a fellowſhip in his ſufferings, Phil. iii. 10. and are ſharers in the glory and bliſs of his reſurrection and exaltation. The relation between them is often repreſented by that between huſband and wife, between whom all things are common. Hence the apoſtle argues, that *if we are Chriſt's, then all things are ours.* 1 Cor. iii. 21. *ad fin.* There is alſo an happy interchange of property between Chriſt and his people; happy for them, though it was terrible to him. He took their ſin upon him, and they have his righteouſneſs in exchange. He endured the death they had incurred, and they enjoy the life he obtained. He aſſumed the curſe due to them, and they have the bleſſing transferred to them which was due to him. Here again the conjugal relation may be a proper illuſtration. As the wife is entitled to the inheritance of her huſband, and he is anſwerable for her debts and obligations, ſo Chriſt made himſelf anſwerable in behalf of his people, for all their debts to the law and juſtice of God; and they are entitled to all the bleſſings he has purchaſed. O what a gracious and advantageous exchange is this for us!

Now the Lord's Supper is a very proper emblem of this communion, and a ſuitable mean to cultivate it.

it.* It is the place where Chriſt and his people meet, and have their interviews. He, the great Maſter of the feaſt, feeds them at his own table, upon his own proviſions, in his own houſe, and they eat and drink, as it were, in company with him; and thus it is a ſocial entertainment between them. There he favours them with his ſpiritual preſence, and gives them acceſs to him; and they draw near to him with humble boldneſs, and enjoy a full liberty of ſpeech and converſation with him. There, under the elements of bread and wine, he makes over to them his body and blood, and all the bleſſings purchaſed by his ſufferings; and they receive them with eager deſire: they caſt their guilt and unworthineſs upon him, and give themſelves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them. There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciouſly acknowledges their title good. There is a ſolemn exchange made between them of guilt for righteouſneſs, of miſery for happineſs, of the curſe for a bleſſing, of life for death. Chriſt takes the evils upon himſelf, and they caſt them off themſelves upon him; and he makes over the bleſſings to them, and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, and, as it were, ſitting down together at one table, like huſband and wife, or parent and children, is a very proper emblem and repreſentation. And I doubt not but ſome of you upon ſuch occaſions have enjoyed the pleaſures of communion with him, which gives you an high eſteem

* The apoſtle illuſtrates this point in 1 Cor. x. where he cautions the Corinthians againſt joining with idolaters in their religious feſtivals, becauſe they could not do it without holding communion with thoſe dæmons in honour of whom they were celebrated. His argument is to this purpoſe: 'That as in the Lord's ſupper we hold a communion with Chriſt, and as the Jews in their ſacred feaſts communicated with God at his altar, ſo in theſe idolatrous feaſts they held a religious communion with the idol.' And this ſuppoſes that in the Lord's ſupper we really have communion with Chriſt. See ver. 20, 21.

teem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design than is in the power of any language to afford.

Here again you may learn one important preparative for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and that is, reconciliation to God, and a delight in communion with him. You cannot walk together, or maintain fellowship with him, till you are agreed, and take pleasure in his society; therefore carefully inquire into this point.

Having thus shewn you the principal ends of this institution, and the qualifications necessary in those that would partake of it, I shall subjoin this one general remark, 'That it is evident from all that has been 'said, that persons who live vicious and irreligious 'lives, whatever their profession be, have no right 'to this ordinance, and should not be admitted to 'it by the officers of the church, till they profess 'their repentance and reformation.' When we exclude such, we are not taking too much upon us, nor pretending to judge of what we have nothing to do with; but we only exercise that power which is inherent in every society, and with which Christ has expressly invested his church. Every society has a power to exclude those from its peculiar privileges, who violate the essential and fundamental laws of its constitution. And no law can be so essential to any constitution, as a life of holiness is to the character of a christian, and the constitution of the christian church. It is no matter what persons profess with their lips, it is the life that is to be regarded as the decisive evidence. What would it signify for a man to insist upon it that he was honest, if he persisted in theft and robbery; or to take the oaths of allegiance, when his conduct was a course of rebellion against his sovereign? And equally insignificant and absurd is a profession of christianity without a correspondent practice. If we consider the design and end of this ordinance, we cannot but see that such persons cut themselves off from all right to it. Is it fit that a drunkard,

a drunkard, a ſwearer, or any profane ſinner ſhould commemorate the death of the holy Jeſus while he has no love to him, but is determined to go on in ſin? Should they wear the badge of Chriſt's diſciples, whoſe lives proclaim them his enemies? Should they affix their ſeals to the covenant of grace, who have never conſented to it, but are groſsly violating it by their practice? Should they hold communion with Chriſt and his people, who have fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs? Hear the apoſtle upon this head: *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils*, 1 Cor. x. 21. the thing is abſurd and impracticable. *For what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? or what communion hath light with darkneſs? or what concord hath Chriſt with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.* 2 Cor. vi. 14—17. As to public offences, the apoſtle gives this direction to Timothy, which is binding upon all the miniſters of Chriſt: *Them that ſin*, that is, that ſin publicly, rebuke *before all, that others alſo may fear.* 1 Tim. v. 20. To the ſame purpoſe he ſpeaks to Titus; *a man that is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, reject*, Tit. iii. 10. or caſt out of the church. This indeed is immediately intended of fundamental errors in principle, but it may undoubtedly be applied to vicious practices; for, as Archbiſhop Tillotſon juſtly obſerves, 'The worſt of hereſies is a bad life.' As to private offences againſt a particular perſon, in which the church, as ſuch, is not concerned, private meaſures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, till they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprized of it; and if he pay no regard to that authority, he is to be excluded from the ſociety. This is according to Chriſt's expreſs direction, in Matt. xviii. 15, &c. *If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee*

thee and him alone: if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen-man and a publican. There is nothing more plain in ſcripture than that ſcandalous members ſhould be caſt out of the church; and an exceſſive indulgence is moſt ſeverely cenſured. St. Paul orders Timothy to *turn away from ſuch as have the form of godlineſs, but deny the power thereof.* 2 Tim. iii. 5. He lays the weight of his apoſtolic authority upon the chriſtian church in this caſe. *We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jeſus, that ye withdraw yourſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.* 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are ſeverely threatened by Chriſt himſelf, for tolerating the corrupt ſect of the Nicolaitans, and the followers of Baalam's and Jezebel's profane and looſe practices, and not caſting them out of their communion. Rev. ii. 14, &c. And the church of Epheſus is commended for her ſtrict diſcipline, and *that ſhe could not bear them that were evil, and had tried pretended apoſtles*, diſcovered and rejected them as impoſtors. But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies for abundant evidence of the neceſſity of this holy diſcipline. Here St. Paul warmly rebukes the Corinthian church for allowing a ſcandalous member to continue in communion with them; and ſolemnly charges them to caſt him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the god of this world. And this he ſtrongly deſcribes, in order to ſtrike terror into the offender, as a delivering him over to Satan. He urges this wholeſome ſeverity as a proper expedient to bring the offender himſelf to repentance, and eſpecially to keep their church pure. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* And juſt ſo the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt

the whole society. It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline that the primitive church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathens and idolaters. And it is the want of this that has so scandalously corrupted the generality of our modern churches, whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess. Let not us imitate them, but pity and pray for them, lest we become a mere mass of corruption, like them. The apostle forbids not only all religious communion, but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more shy of them than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. *I wrote to you*, says he, *not to keep company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world:* that is, 'I do not mean that you should break off all intercourse with the fornicators of this world, who are professedly of the world, and make no pretensions to christianity; or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world:' all places are so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them without leaving human society altogether. *But now I have written unto you*, says he, *not to keep company, if any one that is called a brother*, a christian brother by profession, here lies the emphasis, *if any one that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not to keep company with such a one, no not to eat.* 1 Cor. v. ver. 10, 11. Cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with such a one: do not make a choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much less in the sacred feast of the Lord's supper.

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority to the faithful exercise of discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of mankind, yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make a compliment

of

of the ordinances of Chriſt, it is at our peril. It is therefore the moſt unreaſonable and abſurd thing for perſons by their offences to conſtrain the officers of the church to animadvert upon them, and then to take it ill that they faithfully do their duty. All that is required of them is a profeſſion of deep repentance for their miſconduct, and a promiſe of reformation for the future. And is this too much to do to repair the injury they have done to religion, to ſatisfy the ſociety to which they belong, and reſtore themſelves into the charity of their brethren, whoſe hearts are ſo grieved by their conduct? Or are they indeed determined not to repent and reform, but go on in their wicked courſes? Then they have nothing to do with the peculiar privileges of the Chriſtian church, and therefore ſhould not claim them. It is in vain here to object, 'That none can forgive ſins but God, and therefore they will not confeſs them to man.' For, as I told you, every member of the Chriſtian church ought to give his fellow-members ſome evidence that he is indeed one of their body, and worthy of their charity. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into ſome ſcandalous ſin inconſiſtent with his profeſſion, he does not ſo much as profeſs his repentance? It is only God that can pardon the ſin, as it is done againſt him; but the church is alſo offended, and every ſociety as well as particular perſon who is offended, has a right to demand ſatisfaction. Hence we are commanded to *confeſs our faults to one another*, James v. 16. and that is a proud, impenitent creature indeed, unworthy of a place among Chriſtians, who thinks it a mighty thing to make this ſmall ſatisfaction. The inceſtuous Corinthian was brought to repentance by the wholeſome ſeverities uſed with him. And upon this, the apoſtle, in his ſecond epiſtle, adviſes them to *forgive him* (which implies, that in ſome ſenſe the offence was againſt the church; and, in that ſenſe, that they had power to forgive him) *that they ſhould comfort him, and*

and confirm their love towards him leſt he ſhould be ſwallowed up with over-much ſorrow. 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. And ſhall we be more obſtinate than an inceſtuous, excommunicated Corinthian?

As this ſubject naturally came in my way, and as it is neceſſary for us as church-members to have right ideas of goſpel-diſcipline, I have taken this opportunity to enlarge on it; and I hope you will ſo remember it, as to render all inſtructions on this head needleſs hereafter.

I now proceed to what is more practical.

Let me, as an herald of Jeſus Chriſt, proclaim to you the buſineſs of the next Lord's day. We are going to commemorate the moſt important event that ever happened upon our globe; an event accompliſhed about ſeventeen hundred years ago, but never to be forgotten; an event that extends its happy conſequences to the remoteſt periods of eternity, I mean the ſufferings and death of Jeſus Chriſt for us. And who among you is prepared and willing to commemorate this grand event? Where are the broken-hearted penitents? Where the lovers of a crucified Saviour? Where the happy perſons that believe in him with all their hearts? Come, take the dear memorials of your precious Redeemer; come, refreſh your ſouls once more with the ſweet remembrance of his love. O! ſhall his dear name be forgot among us? What! forgotten, after all he has done, after all he has ſuffered for us! Can you bear the thought? We are going to profeſs openly before a ſcoffing world, that we are the ſervants and diſciples of a crucified Chriſt; we are going to put on the badges of his ſervants, and wear his livery; to enliſt as volunteers under his banner, and ſwear allegiance and fidelity to him. And where are thoſe that are willing to join with us? *Who is upon the Lord's ſide? Who?* Come ye that will have Chriſt for your Maſter, come enter your names in his liſt: be fixed and determined for him. *How long will you halt between two opinions?*

It

It is a plain caſe, and requires no long time to deliberate. Come, ye that would ſtand among his people at his right hand at laſt, come now with prepared hearts, and mingle among them at his table. We are going to enter into an everlaſting covenant with our God, and to ſet our ſolemn ſeal to the contract. And who among you gives his conſent? Who is willing to take the Lord Jeſus for his only Saviour and Lord, and to give himſelf up to him entirely and forever? Who will avouch the Lord to be his God, that He may avouch him to be one of his people? How are your hearts, my brethren, diſpoſed in this reſpect? Do they give a full conſent? And are you willing from this time to renounce and abjure all your luſts and ſinful pleaſures? In ſhort, do you conſent to the covenant of grace? If ſo, come and confirm it with that ſolemn oath and ſeal. God and Chriſt are agreed to the propoſal; and if you agree, the happy contract is made; it is eſtabliſhed firmer than the pillars of heaven; and if you had them, you might venture ten thouſand ſouls upon it. We are going to maintain communion with the ſaints, and ſit down with them at the ſame table of our common Lord. And who of you would join yourſelves with that little flock, that deſpiſed but happy few? If you would mingle with them in heaven, ſeparate from the wicked world, and join them now: and as a token of it eat of the ſame bread, and drink of the ſame cup with them. But we are going to maintain communion of a ſtill more exalted kind; communion with the Father of our ſpirits, with the Son of his love, and with the Holy Ghoſt. And where are they that pant and languiſh for this ſacred and divine fellowſhip? Come to the table of the Lord, the place of interview, and you may humbly hope to meet him there. There you may pour out your hearts to him with all the freedom of intimacy and filial boldneſs, and there you may receive the tokens of his love.

My

My brethren, if, upon careful ſelf-examination, you find reaſon to hope you have the qualifications of acceptable communicants, which I have deſcribed, I require you, in the name of that Jeſus who expired upon the croſs for you, a name which one would think ſhould have ſome weight with you; in his endearing, irreſiſtible name, I require you to come to his table. This is not only your privilege, but your duty; and you cannot neglect it without the baſeſt ingratitude and wickedneſs. Shall Jeſus, when he views the gueſts around his table, find your ſeat empty? Alas! ſhall he have reaſon to ſay, 'What! has 'ſuch a one turned his back upon me? I bought him 'with my blood, and have I deſerved to be thus 'treated by him?' O! my brethren, is it come to that paſs with you that you ſtand in need of perſuaſions to commemorate that Saviour who laid down his life for you? Had he been as ſhy of a croſs as you are of his table, as backward to die as you are to commemorate his death, alas! what would have become of you?

What are the obſtructions and diſcouragements that lie in your way? Mention them, and methinks I can remove them all in a few words, when the caſe is ſo plain. Do you urge, that you are afraid you are not prepared? But have you examined yourſelves impartially by what I have ſaid? Are you ſure you have the qualifications mentioned? If ſo, your way is very clear. Or if you are not ſure, does it appear probable to you? If ſo, you may humbly venture. Or if you cannot go ſo far as a probability, have you ſome trembling hopes? hopes which, though they often waver, yet you cannot entirely caſt away, tho' you admit all the evidence you can get, and are deſirous to know the very worſt of yourſelves. Why, if you have even thus much of encouragement, I would adviſe you to come, though with trembling. If you are impartial in ſelf-examination, and yet cannot after all diſcover that you are deſtitute of thoſe qualifications

fications I have mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that you are deceived: perſons are never deceived in this caſe but by their own careleſſneſs and partiality; therefore take courage. If you look out with a careful eye, there is little danger of your ſplitting on this rock.

Or are you afraid that you will not be able to perform your ſacramental vows, but may apoſtatize from your God? But I need not tell you that your ſtrength is entirely from God: and I appeal to yourſelves whether it be moſt likely you will obtain ſtrength from him in the way of duty, or in the neglect of it? My brethren do you do your duty, and leave the conſequence to him. Truſt in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raiſe you up if you ſhould fall. It is not his uſual way to deſert thoſe that, ſenſible of their own weakneſs, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himſelf by promiſe that he will not do it; but you *ſhall be kept by his power through faith unto ſalvation*, 1 Pet. i. 5. and *he will never leave you nor forſake you*, Heb. xiii. 5. therefore, in his ſtrength, humbly make the adventure.

As for ſuch of you as have not the qualifications deſcribed, and yet are communicants at the Lord's table, I have a few ſerious conſiderations to offer to you.

1. Did you never obſerve that ſolemn warning of St. Paul, which, like a flaming ſword, hovers round the table of the Lord to guard it from your profanation? *Whoſoever ſhall eat of this bread, and drink of this cup of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; and eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himſelf.* 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. Keep off, therefore, ye unholy ſinners, leſt the weight of this tremendous curſe fall upon you and cruſh you to ruin.

2. To what purpoſe do you communicate? This will not conſtitute you chriſtians, nor ſave your ſouls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has inſtituted can do this, without an intereſt in Chriſt, and univerſal holineſs

holineſs of heart and life. And will you incur ſuch dreadful guilt, without anſwering any valuable end by it?

3. How abſurd is it for you to pretend friendſhip to Chriſt in this ordinance, when your hearts are not well affected towards him! This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a ſeal; but what do you ſet your ſeal to, when you do not heartily and practically conſent to the covenant of grace? How can you hold communion with the ſaints when you are none of them? or with God, when you neither know him nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his ſervants, when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people when you belong to the camp of the gloomy god of this world? Will you act the part of a Judas over again, and compliment Chriſt with a traiterous kiſs? What abſurdity, what groſs hypocriſy, what a daring inſult is this? Can Omniſcience be impoſed upon by ſuch pretenſions? Or will a jealous God let them eſcape unpuniſhed? Do but read a part of the fiftieth Pſalm: you will ſee your doom, ver. 16—22. *Unto the wicked, God ſaith, what haſt thou to do, that thou ſhouldeſt take my covenant in thy mouth; ſeeing thou hateſt inſtruction, and caſteſt my words behind thee?—Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt I was altogether ſuch a one as thyſelf. But I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* O, ſirs, conſider, it will be a poor plea at laſt to have it to ſay, *Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy preſence? and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets.* The ſupreme Judge will, notwithſtanding, pronounce the dreadful ſentence upon you, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Luke xiii. 26, 27.

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance; and in the uſe of which you may hope to obtain proper qualifications? His

His word, prayer, meditation, and ſuch means, are for the common uſe of ſaints and ſinners, and intended to beget as well as to confirm grace in the hearts of men. But the Lord's ſupper is the peculiar privilege of ſuch as are true chriſtians already; and is intended only to cheriſh and improve true religion where it is begun. Therefore your partaking of it without this grand preparative is prepoſterous, and directly contrary to the order of divine appointment. Sinners, go firſt upon your bended knees before God; cry to him with all the earneſtneſs of periſhing creatures for converting grace. Think upon your miſerable condition, and never take off your thoughts from the melancholy contemplation till your hearts are deeply affected. Read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method firſt, and when you have ſucceeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels and men, will bid you welcome.

5. Conſider how aggravated your puniſhment will be, if you continue in your preſent condition. To ſink into hell from the table of the Lord! O! what a terrible fall! They that periſhed from Sodom and Gomorrah, though their puniſhment will be intolerable, will be but ſlightly puniſhed in compariſon of you. A loſt communicant!—One that went to hell with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Saviour, as it were, in his mouth! O! methinks, ſuch a one muſt be the moſt ſhocking ſight in the infernal regions. How will loſt angels, and loſt heathens, wonder and ſtare at you as an horrible phenomenon, a dreadful curioſity! How will they upbraid you, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, ſon of the morning? art thou alſo become as one of us?" To tell the truth without reſerve, I cannot but tremble at the thought of ſeeing ſuch of you on the left hand of the Judge. O! what a ſhocking figure will you make there! Therefore do not make the profanation of the body and blood of Chriſt the whole of your

religion, but begin where you ſhould, in earneſt endeavours after a new heart and life, in the uſe of the means appointed for that end.

But there are ſome of you perhaps, who may take encouragement from hence, and think you are ſafe, becauſe you have not been guilty of profaning this ſolemn inſtitution. You are conſcious you are not prepared, and therefore muſt contentedly ſtay away. There are, no doubt, ſundry of you who have lived in this neglect all your lives. I have a few things to ſay to you, and I pray you to apply them to yourſelves.

1. Conſider what it is you ſay, when you declare you are unfit for this ordinance. There are ſome that ſeem to make a merit of it, that they ſtay away from a ſenſe of their want of preparation. But what is this want? It is the want of all love to God, of faith in Chriſt, of repentance for ſin; it is the want of holineſs of heart and life, and every good thing; it is to be without pardon, without a title to heaven, without any intereſt in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; it is to be a ſlave to ſin and Satan, an heir of hell, a poor periſhing creature, liable every moment to be cut off, and ſink under the weight of divine vengeance: this is your caſe if you are unfit for this ordinance. Nothing but ſuch things as I have mentioned can render you unfit. And is this a ſafe caſe? Can you contentedly reſt in it? Alas! is their ſo much merit in neglecting to remember Chriſt in this inſtitution, as will render your caſe ſafe, and indemnify you? Muſt you not be ſhocked at the thought?

2. Are you uſing all proper means to obtain preparation, with the utmoſt diligence and earneſtneſs? Or are you inactive and unconcerned about it? If ſo, it is plain you love to be unprepared; you take pleaſure in being diſqualified to remember the Lord Jeſus. And while you are careleſs about this you are virtually careleſs what will become of you, careleſs whether heaven or hell will be the place of your everlaſting

ing residence: and O! what will be the end of such a course! and how terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you that you have lived so many years in the world without affectionately commemorating that Saviour who died for you, without devoting yourselves to God, consenting to his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? O! is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in suffering so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by neglected? what can be a more aggravated wickedness?

4. This neglect clearly proves that you have no regard for Jesus Christ. You do perhaps insist upon it that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love: *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Now this brings the matter to a short issue. There is no command in the whole Bible more plain than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the wilful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus. With what face then can you pretend that you love him? Your love is reprobated, and will not stand the test.

5. Let me remind you of what I observed before, that, by the neglect of this ordinance, you practically renounce your baptism. You are now of age to act for yourselves, and you have not approved of the act of your parents by ratifying it in you own person, therefore you abjure it; you renounce the blessed Trinity, in whose name you were baptized, and to whom you were dovoted; and you give yourselves back to an horrible trinity of another kind, to the world, to sin, and the devil. And are you indeed willing to have no more to do with the God that made you, and with Jesus of Nazareth? Pause and think before you agree to such a dreadful renunciation. But alas! you have agreed to it already, by refusing to renew your early dedication in your own persons. Therefore the best you can now do is to recall

recall your renunciation, and immediately acknowledge the act of your parents as your own.

I would inculcate this particularly on young people. You that are eight or ten years old, or more, you have ſenſe enough to act for yourſelves in ſo plain a caſe. And what are you reſolved upon? Will you be Chriſt's or Satan's? you cannot avoid chooſing one or the other for your maſter; for not poſitively chooſing Chriſt, is virtually chooſing the devil for your lord, and hell for your home. If you do ſtand to the act of your parents in dedicating you to God, come make it your own at his table. Such young gueſts would be an ornament to it: and O! that we may early ſee you there properly prepared!

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourſelves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you liſt. Your obligations do not depend upon your conſent. You were born the ſervants of God, and you will continue under obligations to be ſuch in ſpite of you. Is he not the moſt excellent of beings, your Creator, your Lawgiver, your Preſerver, your Redeemer? And do theſe things infer no obligation upon you? have you not alſo in ſickneſs or under horror of conſcience made vows and reſolutions in your own perſons? And are you free to ſin ſtill? The truth of the caſe is, Do what you will, you are under the ſtrongeſt obligations to God, and you cannot ſhake them off; and if you will not obſerve theſe obligations to duty, you muſt ſubmit for ever to your indiſpenſable obligation to puniſhment. And he will make you know that he has a right to puniſh you, if you will not acknowledge his right to your obedience.

7. What avails it that you can avoid the Lord's table when you cannot poſſibly ſhun death, or avoid his tribunal? Here try all your art, and you will find it in vain. And if you are not prepared for this ordinance of worſhip in the church on earth, much leſs are

are you prepared for thoſe more exalted forms of worſhip in the church in heaven! what then will become of you?

In ſhort, it is a national ſin in our country, that the table of the Lord is contemptible; that men who call themſelves chriſtians live in the wilful neglect of that ordinance which was appointed by him, whom they acknowledge as the Founder of their religion, to be a memorial of himſelf. Alas! the very memory of Chriſt is almoſt loſt among us. *Shall I not viſit for theſe things? ſaith the Lord. Shall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?* Jer. v. 9.

Perhaps ſome of you will ſay, 'You ſhut us up in a ſtrange dilemma indeed. If we come unprepared, we ſin; and if we ſtay away we ſin: and what then ſhall we do?' My brethren, I thus ſhut you up, on purpoſe that you may ſee what a wretched caſe you are in, and that there is no ſafety for you while you continue in it. You are ſhut up under a neceſſity of ſinning, and the beſt choice in ſuch a condition can be only the leſſer evil; though even that is extremely aggravated. Whether you come or ſtay away, you grievouſly ſin: it is all ſin, peril, ruin, and miſery all through: you ſhould neither come unprepared, nor ſtay away unprepared; that is, you ſhould not be unprepared at all. Your want of preparation is in itſelf a complication of wickedneſs; and whatever you do in that ſtate, you are neither ſafe nor in the way of duty: it is altogether a ſtate of ſin and danger. The only way of ſafety and duty is to ſeek for preparation immediately, and with the utmoſt earneſtneſs, and then to come to the Lord's ſupper. And O! let me ſet all this congregation upon this work before we part to-day, and make it the buſineſs of this week. You have ſpent many a week about things of leſs importance, and will you refuſe one to this great work? Now ſet about it; now begin to look into the ſtate of your neglected ſouls; now recollect your ſins; look in upon your depraved hearts; look back

back upon a miſerable miſ-ſpent life; look forward to death, eternity, and the divine tribunal juſt before you; look to Jeſus in the agonies of crucifixion on Mount Calvary; and O! look up to God in earneſt prayer for his mercy. Let theſe things follow you home to your houſes; let them dwell upon your hearts night and day. Do not laugh, or talk, or trifle them away; for O! they will rebound upon you with overwhelming weight at laſt, if you now turn them off. O! that God may prepare a people for himſelf in this poor place! O! that He would viſit this barren ſpot with the ſhowers of divine grace! And may he prepare our hearts for the rich entertainment before us! Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE NATURE AND BLESSEDNESS OF SONSHIP WITH GOD.

1 JOHN iii. 1, 2. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God: therefore the world knows us not, becauſe it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be: but we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is.*

THOUGH the ſchemes of divine Providence run on with the moſt conſummate harmony, and will at laſt terminate in the wiſeſt ends, yet, to the undiſcerning eyes of mortals, confuſion reigns thro' this world, and nothing appears, in this infant ſtate of things, in that light in which eternity, the ſtate of

of maturity, will repreſent every thing. This remark is particularly exemplified in the diſpenſations of grace towards the heirs of heaven. Though they are not in ſuch unmingled darkneſs, even in this region of ignorance and uncertainty, as to have no evidences at all of their being the objects of divine love, and regenerated by the holy Spirit, but may, in ſome ſhining moments at leaſt, conclude that they are even now the Sons of God, yet they can form no adequate ideas of the immenſity of that love which has adopted them as the ſons of God, and made them heirs of heaven, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There are indeed ſuch rays of this love, that, like a flaſh of lightning, break through the cloud that ſurrounds them, as caſt them into a pleaſing conſternation, and make them ſtand and pauſe in delightful aſtoniſhment. In a kind of tranſport of ignorant admiration, they are often exclaiming, *What manner of love is this!* how great, how vaſt, how immenſe, how unaccountable, how incomprehenſible, that love which has given us, us rebellious ſinners and heirs of ruin, the title of the Sons of God, and the many privileges of ſuch relation! Behold what ſort of unheard-of, unparalleled love is this! behold it with intenſe obſervation and grateful wonder.

Ye trifling ſons of men, abſtract your thoughts from the toys of earth, and here fix your attention; here look and gaze, till you are ſo tranſported with the ſurvey of this love, as to be engaged to the moſt vigorous endeavours to be partakers of it. Our brethren in grace, that ſhare in the ſame privilege, do you eſpecially pauſe, behold, and wonder. Let all your admiring powers exert themſelves to the utmoſt in the contemplation of that love which has beſtowed upon you ſo gracious, ſo honourable a diſtinction as that of Sons of the King of Heaven. And ye bleſſed inhabitants of heaven, who know the import of this glorious title, and the riches of the inheritance

reſerved

reſerved for us; ye angels, that are happy in your Maker's goodneſs, but have not been diſtinguiſhed with redeeming grace, look down from your celeſtial thrones, look down to this contemptible earth, and view the greateſt exploit of divine infinite love; for ſurely no atchievement of Almighty grace among your various orders through the vaſt of heaven, can equal this, that we rebellious worms ſhould be called the Sons of God, the higheſt title in which you can glory. Behold, and wonder, and adore with us, and ſupply our defects of praiſe. You ſee farther into the ſecrets of this myſtery of love than we in our preſent ſtate, who can only pauſe in ſilent admiration, or vent our blind conjectures upon it. *What manner of love is this!* therefore give all your contemplative powers a looſe upon a theme you can ſo deeply penetrate.

Farther, As the ſons of God in their preſent ſtate cannot comprehend that love which has conferred this title upon them, ſo they know not fully the glorious import of the title: they only know in general, that when their Father appears they *ſhall be like him*, but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeneſs is: it doth not yet appear, even to themſelves, what they ſhall be. Their livelieſt imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will ere long be: they are utter ſtrangers to their future ſelves. They know themſelves only at preſent in their infancy; but when theſe little children of God, theſe babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fulneſs of the ſtature of Chriſt, they will be prodigious to themſelves, and myſteries which they cannot now conceive. In this world we are accuſtomed to little and obſcure things, and our thoughts are like their objects; we ſee nothing ſufficiently glorious to ſuggeſt to us any proper images of the glory of the ſons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The ſplendor of the meridian

meridian ſun, the grandeur of kings, and the parade of nobles, are but obſcure ſhadows of the glory and magnificence of the meaneſt pious beggar, of the pooreſt Lazarus that ever languiſhed upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven. The difference is greater than that between Job upon the dunghill, lying in aſhes, and covered with ulcers, and Solomon in all his glory. However, amidſt all our ignorance, we may reſt confident in this, that if we are now the children of God, we ſhall be conformed to him, when he appears to us in all his glory on the other ſide of death, and eſpecially when he appears in the clouds in all the majeſty of the univerſal Judge, when every eye ſhall ſee him: and though we ſhould know no more than this in general, we may reſt implicitly ſatisfied that we ſhall be inconceivably glorious and happy, ſince the perfection of our nature conſiſts in conformity to God. We may be ſure that that ſtate which the apoſtle here, by unerring inſpiration, calls a likeneſs to God, the ſtandard of all excellency, muſt be as perfect as our nature can bear. The apoſtle having ſaid, that *when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him*, ſubjoins, *for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* This viſion of the bleſſed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the evidence, or as the cauſe of our likeneſs to God when he ſhall appear. Conſidering it as an evidence, the meaning is, 'It is evident that we ſhall be in ſome meaſure like to God when he appears, otherwiſe we could not bear the full viſion of his glories; we could not ſee him and live.' It is alſo evident the apoſtle here ſpeaks of the viſion of God as an happineſs, and the bleſſed privilege of his ſons. Now to ſee God could afford no pleaſure to ſuch as are not like to him: they would be ſhocked and confounded at the ſight, and ſhrink from it, and by how much the clearer the viſion, by ſo much the more they would hate him, becauſe by ſo much the more they would diſcover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a ſufficient evidence of our

likeneſs to God, that we can bear the viſion of his naked perfections with pleaſure, for none that are unlike to him can bear it. Conſidering the paſſage in the other view, which probably was what the apoſtle intended, as the cauſe of likeneſs to him, it means, that the full and direct views of him will be transformative, and efficacious to change the beholders into his likeneſs. As the light ſhining upon glaſs renders it tranſparent, or as the ſun diffuſes its luſtre into a diamond, and gives it an intrinſic radiancy, ſo the diſcoveries of the divine perfections will impreſs their image upon the minds they illuminate. Their views will not be ſuperficial and ſpeculative, nor attract an idle gaze, but they ſhall be vital, efficacious, and impreſſive; and no wonder if ſuch views, which we now know ſo little of, ſhould produce a perfection we can now ſo little conceive.

If the ſons of God are ſuch ſtrangers to the riches of their preſent title, and the dignity and glory of their future ſelves, no wonder a blind world ſhould not know them. If it does not yet appear to themſelves what they ſhall be, much leſs does it appear to others, who are ſtrangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and therefore cannot diſcern his children by their reſemblance to him. This the apoſtle may intimate when he ſays, *It doth not appear* (that is, it doth not appear to others) *what we ſhall be;* and we are led to this ſenſe by the former verſe, *therefore the world*, the general run of mankind, who are ſtrangers to God, *know us not;* that is, do not diſtinguiſh, love, and honour us, who are the children of God, *becauſe they know him not.* As they are ignorant of our Father, and diſregard him, ſo they accordingly treat us. They look upon us with contempt, and are wholly ignorant of our heavenly extraction and dignity, and thus it will be till we ſhine in all the glory of the children of ſo illuſtrious a king, and poſſeſs the inheritance of the ſaints in light; then, to their confuſion, they ſhall diſcern the difference

difference between the righteous and the wicked. Mal. iii. *ult.*—I ſhall,

I. Show you what is the import of the glorious title, the Sons of God.

II. Mention ſome inſtances of the preſent ignorance of the ſons of God, with regard to their future ſtate. And,

III. Show in what reſpects they are miſtaken and unknown to the world.

I. I ſhall ſhow what is the import of this glorious title, the Sons of God.

It is evident that the title is uſed here, not in ſo general a ſenſe as elſewhere, where it ſignifies no more than the creatures of God, Luke iii. *ult.* Acts xvii. 28, 29, for here it is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of true chriſtians, in which the world in general does not partake. In the ſenſe of the text, it implies that believers are born again of God; that they are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and that they are the heirs of heaven.

1. To be the ſons of God, implies that they are regenerated, or born of him.

He is a ſon who is begotten and born; and therefore to be a child of God, ſuppoſes that we are begotten by him. This ſeems to be the peculiar foundation of that ſonſhip the apoſtle here has immediately in view; for it is the thought of being born of God, mentioned in the laſt verſe of the foregoing chapter, that ſeems to introduce the text, and raps him away, in the fourth verſe of this chapter, into that tranſported exclamation, *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God!*

This new birth you have often heard me deſcribe, as a thorough univerſal change of a corrupt rebellious ſinner into an affectionate, penitent, obedient ſervant of God. His views of things, and diſpoſitions towards them, are happily altered, which produce a correſpondent change in his practice. But I cannot enlarge without excluding the other ſubjects of my diſcourſe.

I pray

I pray God you would ſeriouſly conſider the importance of this ſpiritual birth, and not vainly deem yourſelves the ſons of God while you are ſtrangers to it: you may as well become the ſons of men without being generated by human parents, as the ſons of God without being regenerated by ſupernatural grace; for the ſcripture has repeatedly declared the abſolute neceſſity of it in various terms. All that become the children of God are born of him, and *not of blood*, or by natural generation, nor *of the will of the fleſh*, or by any natural propenſions of theirs, nor *of the will of man*, or by the beſt endeavours of others with them. John i. 12, 13. *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* begets them again, 1 Peter i. 3. and creates them anew, Epheſ. ii. 10. ſo that *old things are paſſed away, and behold, all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. And Chriſt himſelf, who beſt knows the terms of admiſſion into heaven, has aſſured us with a *verily, verily, that except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3, 5. And this is the declaration of infallible inſpiration, that *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion;* that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewiſh or Chriſtian religion is of no avail to ſalvation, *but the new creature.* Gal. vi. 15.

2. They that are the ſons of God are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and this is implied in their title.

God here treats us with his uſual condeſcenſion in expreſſing divine things in the humble language of mortals, by metaphors borrowed from affairs amongſt men, that are familiar to us. Therefore form an idea of the uſual privileges which a child enjoys from a gracious and powerful Father, and leave proper room for the infinitely ſuperior perfections of our heavenly Father to thoſe of the moſt excellent human parents, and you may from the analogy know ſomething of the peculiar privileges of the children of God. A ſon, you know, has liberty of acceſs to his father,

father, however great; he obtains his requeſts; he has the guardianſhip and compaſſion of his father; and is ſeaſonably corrected by him for his good. And thus our heavenly Father deals with the children of his grace.

He gives them liberty of acceſs to him in prayer and the inſtitutions of the goſpel. He not only allows them to attend upon his ordinances, which many do that continue ſtrangers to him, but at times he enlarges their hearts, ſo that they find themſelves near him; they are admitted into his preſence-chamber in free audience with him, and pour out all their hearts before him, vent their complaints, beg a ſupply of their wants, and render their grateful acknowledgments for his mercies. This temper of mind is ſo ſuitable to their relation as the ſons of God, that the holy Spirit, as the author of it, is called the Spirit of Adoption; and the children of God are not capable of exerciſing this filial freedom at pleaſure, but juſt as he enables them to *draw near with humble boldneſs to the throne of grace.* Rom. viii. 14, 15, 26, 27. Heb. x. 22. and 2 Cor. iii. 17. And the holy Spirit, as a Spirit of liberty and adoption, is a privilege entailed upon the ſons of God, and which they at times enjoy. Gal. iv. 5, 6.

Again, As the children of God have liberty to addreſs their Father, ſo they have the privilege of having their petitions graciouſly heard and anſwered. An human parent is ready to give good gifts to his children, and much more is our heavenly Father. Thus Chriſt reaſons in the moſt familiar and moving manner, in Matt. vii. 7—11. and Luke xi. 11—13. and he ſeems to intimate that this privilege is implied in the relation, by repeating the indearing term Father, in Matt. vi. 6, 8, 9. *Pray to thy Father—and thy Father ſhall reward thee—Your Father knoweth what things you have need of, before ye aſk him. After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father,* &c.

Again,

Again, The children of God are entitled to his protection and compaſſion. His guardian care is celebrated in Pſalm xci. and Pſalm cxxi. and his tender compaſſion in Pſalm ciii. 13. Iſai. lxiii. 9. and in numberleſs paſſages that ſpeak of *his bowels of mercy, his compaſſions*, &c.

Another privilege of the children of God is, that they are ſeaſonably corrected by his fatherly diſpleaſure. This indeed they are too apt to count a calamity rather than a privilege; but ſince his correction is neceſſary for their reformation, ſince it proceeds from the benevolence of a Father, and not from the vengeance of an incenſed Judge, ſince it is intended for their benefit and not for their deſtruction, ſince they are ſupported under it, and it has a proper meaſure and ſeaſonable end, and ſince it will be more than compenſated with future rewards, it follows, that their chaſtiſement is one of their bleſſings, and as ſuch it ſeems promiſed rather than threatened, and mentioned as a badge of the ſons of God, Pſalm lxxxix. 30—34. Heb. xii. 5—11. and many of the children of God have found reaſon to praiſe him for this wholeſome ſeverity. Pſalm cxix. 67, 68, 71. Upon this principle St. James exhorts them to *rejoice when they enter into divers temptations*, James i. 2. and St. Peter tells them that they will befal them only *if need be*. 1 Peter i. 6.

3. The children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and their relation implies a title to it.

They are born to a crown, begotten to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away*, &c. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. *If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt.* Rom. viii. 16, 17. Gal. iv. 7. And how vaſt their inheritance is, you may learn from Rev. xxi. 7. and 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

What advancement is this to mean, ſinful, miſerable creatures! Out of priſon they come to reign. They are raiſed from the dunghill, and ſet among the princes of heaven. No wonder the apoſtle ſhould exclaim,

exclaim, *Behold! what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God.*

Thus I have briefly ſhewn you the glorious import of your relation, the ſons of God; and you ſee it ſhould be the greateſt concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the children of God, you have been ſupernaturally begotten by him, as I obſerved before, (James i. 18.) and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honour him; (Mal. i. 6.) you love and fear to offend him, and cheerfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulneſs; you are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. and bear the lineaments of his holineſs. But if it be otherwiſe with you, as I fear it is with many, if you be not conformed to the moral perfections of God and bear his image, if you have not the diſpoſitions of dutiful children towards him, but the temper of the Devil, and do his works, then *you are of your father the Devil.* John vi. 14. And though you may reſent this, as the Jews did, the charge is fixed upon you. Therefore awaken all the importunity of your ſouls, and cry to him for regenerating grace, that you alſo may become the ſons and daughters of the living God. But if you find theſe characters of the children of God which I juſt now mentioned, then *rejoice in the Lord always, and again I ſay rejoice:* you are happier than princes, more great and honourable than the ſons of earthly kings. You cannot now form any ideas what miracles of glory and bleſſedneſs your Father will make of ſuch mean, guilty, and wretched things as yourſelves. Which introduces what I next propoſed

II. To mention ſome inſtances of the ignorance of the ſons of God with regard to their future ſtate.

It is true indeed, and ſome of you, I doubt not, know it by experience, that the children of God in ſome ſhining moments enjoy prelibations of heaven, and even now *rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory,*

glory, 1 Peter 1. 8. † juſt as a child in infancy ſtumbles upon a manly thought: and as the firſt dawning of reaſon may give a child ſome obſcure hint of the maſterly reaſonings of a mature genius; ſo from theſe foretaſtes of heaven, the ſons of God may form ſome faint ideas of the perfection of its happineſs in full enjoyment. They find theſe diſpoſitions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will conſtitute their bleſſedneſs; and they now find ſo much real happineſs in the exerciſe of ſuch diſpoſitions, though in an imperfect degree, as fully convinces them that nothing is neceſſary to make them completely happy but the perfection of ſuch exerciſes, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is they have not yet experienced; their higheſt thoughts fall ſhort of it; and *it doth not yet appear to them what they ſhall be* in the following particulars.

1. It doth not yet appear what they ſhall be with reſpect to the enlargement of the faculties of their ſouls.

That the human ſoul is capable of vaſt enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimenſions, is evident; and we find by experience its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the cloſe of life, eſpecially in men of a ſtudious turn. And we may be ſure that, when like a bird out of a cage, it gets looſe among its kindred ſpirits, and flies at large in its proper element, its faculties will be vaſtly improved: otherwiſe it would be overborne and cruſhed with the weight of glory; it would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightneſs, like a mole that has wrought itſelf into day-light. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exerciſes, ſo, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the ſoul would be incapable of exerciſing them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted ſervices of that mature world. You may therefore

† *Chara—dedoxaſmene*, a glorified joy.

therefore reſt confident in this, ye ſons of God, that your little ſouls will then be vaſtly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of his riper years, ſo it is with you. Compare your preſent ſelves with your infant-ſelves, and you will ſee a vaſt difference even in the preſent ſtate; and how vaſt the difference between what you now are and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the proper region, the natural element of ſpirits! Beloved, you are now the ſons of God; and he will make you ſuch beings as becomes ſo near a relation to ſuch a Father; and what prodigies can he make of you! He that could make you what you are out of nothing, in the courſe of a few years, what can he make you out of what you now are, through the ſeries of everlaſting ages! How can he mature and enlarge your ſouls from one degree of perfection to another! ſo that, in ſome future period, you will no more reſemble what you are now, than you now reſemble what you were in the womb, or upon the breaſt. Your underſtandings, through an endleſs duration, may be ſtill brightening, without ever coming to their meridian; and your views be ſtill enlarging, though ſtill infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that ſouls ſo improved ſhould be united to bodies ſuited to them. Which leads me to obſerve,

2. It does not yet appear to you what kind of glorious bodies you will have after the reſurrection.

We are ſure they will ſtill be material bodies, otherwiſe they would not be bodies at all. But matter we know is capable of prodigious refinements. Yonder globe of light, the ſun, is of the ſame original matter with a clod of earth, and differs only in modifications. How vaſt the difference between this animal fleſh on our bodies, and earth and water! and yet they are originally the ſame. Earth and water are the materials of which grain and other vegetables, that animals feed upon, are formed; and our bodies conſiſt

of grain formed into bread, and of the fleſh of beaſts: ſo true is it, not only with reſpect to Adam, but all his poſterity, that they are but duſt. In ſhort, there is a tranſmutation of matter into a ſurpriſing variety of forms, wherever we caſt our eyes: the linen we wear was once earth, that was firſt refined into flax, then formed into thread, then woven into what we now ſee it. Thus our bodies may be changed in a moſt amazing manner, and yet continue ſubſtantially the ſame. St. Paul tells us, that they will be ſpiritual bodies, 1 Cor. xv. 44. that is, ſo exquiſitely refined, that they will reſemble proper ſpirits, as near as it is poſſible, while they retain their materiality; and elſewhere he ſays, that *the Lord Jeſus will change our vile body, that it may be formed like unto his glorious body.* Phil. iii. 21. Such is the glory of Chriſt's body in its now exalted ſtate, that the ſplendors breaking from it ſtruck Paul and his fellow-travellers to the ground, and deprived him of ſight for three days; how illuſtrious then muſt thoſe bodies be that reſemble his, though we allow his a ſuitable ſuperiority! This the apoſtle intimates by repreſenting the change of the bodies of ſaints at the reſurrection as a mighty exploit of God's all-ſubduing power. Phil. iii. 21. We are ſure the body will not then be a clog to the active ſpirit, but a proper inſtrument for the employments of heaven. It may be free from the law of gravitation, and capable of moving every way with equal ſpeed; it may be nimble and quick as a glance of lightning; it may be adorned with a viſible glory more bright than the ſun in its meridian luſtre, like the body of Chriſt on the mount of transfiguration. Matt. xvii. 2. Dan. xii. 3. and Matt. xiii. 43. It will then be incapable of pain, ſickneſs, and death, Iſaiah xxxiii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 33. and will no more feel hunger and thirſt, nor any of the appetites of animal nature; Rev. vii. 16. it will be capable of the moſt excellent ſenſations of pleaſure through every organ; and a ſuitable companion to an improved and glorified ſoul. Such bodies

bodies will the ſaints have: but what it is to have ſuch bodies, we have now no experience; and ſhall never know till the glorious morning of the reſurrection.

3. It doth not yet appear to us what it is to be perfect in holineſs.

However enlarged and glorious our ſouls and bodies ſhould become, we ſhould be ſtill miſerable without a proportionable perfection in holineſs. Now this, alas! we do not as yet know. We humbly hope ſome of us know what it is to feel the ſpark of divine love in our breaſts. We hope we have taſted ſome ſmall drops of bliſs, though intermingled with gall and wormwood. We know what it is to exert our feeble powers in the ſervice of the bleſſed God, and in contemplating and admiring his excellencies; but, alas! ſin ſtill cleaves to us, and deadens our powers: numberleſs imperfections attend our beſt moments. But O! to have all the powers of ſoul and body enlarged; to exert them to the full ſtretch in the exerciſes of heaven; to find them animated and directed by the moſt conſummate holineſs, and free from every the leaſt taint of ſin, what an inconceivable ſtate is this! O how unlike the preſent! Sure in ſuch a ſtate we ſhould hardly know ourſelves: it would aſtoniſh us to find that we, who had been ſo long accuſtomed to be aſſaulted and perplexed with ſome guilty thought or ſinful inclination, ſhould at once commence perfectly free from it! that we, who have ſo long made ſuch languid eſſays, ſhould find all our powers full of unwearied immortal vigour! what an happy ſurpriſe will this be!

4. It does not yet appear what will be the employments and ſervices of the heavenly world.

We know, from the plain declarations of ſacred writ, that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their diſplays in the works of nature and grace, celebrating the praiſes of God, and proſtrate adorations before him, will be no ſmall part of the happi-

neſs

neſs of a future ſtate. But we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that it will conſiſt intirely in contemplation and adoration. A ſtate of activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will ſeparate ſpirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in theſe mortal regions? a very pleaſant employ to generous and benevolent minds! Will they be ambaſſadors of their Sovereign to the remote parts of his empire, to bear his meſſages, and diſcharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important ſervices to the preſent and future creations, and the inſtruments of divine beneficence to worlds now unknown? A philoſophic curioſity would pry into theſe things, and even a pious thirſt for knowledge would be ſatisfied; but, alas! we know not what anſwer to give to theſe inquiries, till the light of eternity ſhall break on us. But,

5. The Sons of God, in conſequence of their improvements, natural and moral, and of their exalted ſervices and employments, will be made ſo exquiſitely happy, as they can have now no ideas of the felicity.

We know not what it is, in the preſent ſtate, to have every want ſupplied, every deſire ſatisfied, and all our vaſt capacity of happineſs filled to the utmoſt; and therefore we can form no juſt conceptions of our future ſelves, when we ſhall be thus perfectly happy.

Behold, ye ſons of God; behold the wonders that open before you! ſee to what vaſt things you are born! Can you ſurvey this myſtery, and not be loſt in pleaſing wonder and cry out, *Behold! what manner of love is beſtowed on us!*

Alas! can you forget your own happineſs; and let your thoughts and affections run out upon the things of this world, as if they were your portion? Shall the King's ſons thus degrade their dignity, and depreciate their inheritance?

And you, unhappy ſinners; ye who are not the ſons of God by regeneration, what do you think of

of your caſe, when it is the very reverſe of all this? Your ſouls, indeed, will be enlarged, but enlarged only that they may be more capacious veſſels for torment; and your bodies ſhall be made ſtrong and immortal; but it will be to bear ſtrong, immortal miſery. Inſtead of becoming perfect in holineſs, you will arrive to an horrid perfection in ſin. As all ſin will be rooted out from the hearts of the children of God, ſo all the virtuous and amiable qualities you might retain in this world will fall from you: and as the children of God will be transformed into pure unmingled holineſs, you will degenerate into pure unmingled wickedneſs, and conſequently you muſt be as miſerable as they will be happy; and all your enlarged capacities will be as full of torment as theirs of bliſs. I may therefore adapt the text to you, ſinners: now you are the children of the devil; *but it doth not appear what you ſhall be;* you know not what prodigies of vengeance, what miracles of miſery you ſhall be made: therefore awake from your careleſſneſs and neglect, and ſeek earneſtly to become the children of God.

III. And laſtly, I proceed to ſhew in what reſpects the ſons of God are unknown to the world, and miſtaken by them.

The irreligious world may ſee a conſiderable difference between thoſe that are, in the judgment of charity, the children of God, and others; but this they rather look upon as an odious ſingularity than as a peculiar glory and excellency. They may ſee their life is not according to the courſe of this world; and, if they were witneſſes to their ſecret devotions, or could penetrate their hearts, they would ſee a vaſtly greater difference; but, by how much the greater difference, by ſo much the more they hate them. And though they ſtill profeſs a mighty veneration for religion, yet, wherever it appears, they hate, oppoſe, and aſperſe it; not indeed under that honourable name, but under ſome odious character that will cloke

cloke their wickedneſs, and the more effectually expoſe it. They love religion, they ſay, and God forbid they ſhould ſpeak a word againſt it; but they hate hypocriſy, preciſeneſs, &c. and wherever a perſon appears remarkably religious, they will be ſure to brand him with ſome of their odious names. Thus living chriſtianity, and its profeſſors, have always met with more contempt and hatred in the world than eaſy and pliable, or even the moſt profligate and abandoned ſinners.

Now this is owing to the ignorance of the world as to what the Sons of God ſhall ere long be. They do not look upon them as ſuch favourites of heaven; otherwiſe they would not dare to deſpiſe them at ſuch a rate. The ſons of God are princes in diſguiſe; and therefore they are not known by a blind world, who, as they are ignorant of their Father, cannot diſcern his features in them.

O, ſinners! could you but ſee in all his future glory the meaneſt ſaint whom you now contemn and ridicule, how would it aſtoniſh you! it would tempt you rather to the extreme of adoration, than contempt: how willingly would you change conditions with him!

Well, ſtay a little, and there will be a full *manifeſtation of the ſons of God.* Romans viii. 19. You will then ſee thoſe whom you now account ſtupid mopiſh creatures, that have no taſte for the pleaſures of life, ſhining more glorious than the ſun; happy as their natures can admit, and, in their humble ſphere, reſembling God himſelf.

It is, however, all things conſidered, an inſtance of divine wiſdom, that *it does not yet appear* to themſelves or to others what the ſons of God ſhall be. Such a manifeſtation would quite ſtun and confound the world, and ſtrike it into a torpid conſternation. It would render the children of God utterly impatient of the preſent life and its employments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth; it would

put

put an end to the neceſſary activity about temporal concerns, break off the deſigns of providence, and quite alter the form of adminiſtration in this world. Therefore the manifeſtation is wiſely put off to the moſt proper ſeaſon.

I ſhall now conclude with a few reflections.

Firſt, What a ſtate of darkneſs and imperfection is this! We ſlipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation; and we ſhall be ere long we know not what. Alas! how ſhort are our views! all before us is impenetrable darkneſs, and we can ſee but a very little way behind us. What ſmall cauſe then have the wiſeſt of us to be elated with our own knowledge! In compariſon of angelic beings, and even of our future ſelves, we ſee no more than the mole groveling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly, But what ſurprizing diſcoveries of things will flaſh upon us when we enter the other world! O! my brethren, when we aſcend the heavenly mount, and take large ſurveys all around of the immenſity of the works of God, when the unveiled perfections of the Deity ſuddenly ſhine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our waking from the ſleep of death, how ſhall we be loſt in wonders! What ſcenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How ſhall we be aſtoniſhed at ourſelves, and ready to vent our ſurpriſe in ſome ſuch ſtrains as theſe; "Is this I, who ſo lately was groveling in yonder world! how changed! how ennobled! how glorified! Is this the ſoul that was once ſo overrun with the leproſy of ſin! once ſo blind and dark! once ſo perverſe and depraved! ſo feeble and weak! tormented with vain anxieties and trifling cares, or tranſported with empty joys and deluſive proſpects! is this the ſoul that had ſo many hard conflicts with temptations, that felt ſuch ſhocks of jealouſy, and ſo often languiſhed under deſponding fears of ſeeing this glorious

glorious place! O how changed! how free from every anxious care! unmoleſted by ſo much as a guilty thought! nobly triumphant over ſin and ſorrow, and all that is feared in its mortal ſtate! And is this my once frail, mortal body! my incumbrance in yonder world; how amazingly transformed! how glorioufly faſhioned! O to what a pitch of excellency and bliſs can almighty grace raiſe the meaneſt worm! and O! in what raptures of praiſe ſhould I celebrate this grace through all eternity!" Thus may we think the glorified ſaint would expreſs his wonder. But, alas! we know juſt nothing about it. The ſenſations and language of immortals are beyond our comprehenſion. But,

Thirdly, We are juſt on the brink of this ſurprizing ſtate. A few years, perhaps a few moments, may open to our eyes theſe amazing ſcenes; the next day, or the next hour, they may flaſh upon us; and O! where are we then! in what a ſtrange world! among what new beings! and what ſhall we then be! O! how amazingly transformed! Should you ſee a clod from beneath your feet riſing and brightening into a ſtar, or ſhining like the noon-day ſun, the tranſformation would not be half ſo aſtoniſhing. Then we have done with all beneath the ſun! all the little things of this trifling world will vaniſh at once like a vapour; and all before us will be the moſt important and majeſtic realities. Therefore,

Fourthly, How aſtoniſhing is it that we ſhould think ſo little of what is before us! that we ſhould ſtill ſtumble on in the dark, thoughtleſs of theſe approaching wonders! Ye ſons of God, what are you doing, that you think no more of your relation to God, and your heavenly inheritance? If a large eſtate, or the government of a kingdom ſhould fall to you to-morrow, and you were told of it before-hand, would it not always dwell upon your thoughts, and keep you awake this night with the eager proſpect? What! would things comparatively low fix your attention!

tention! and can you be thoughtleſs of a glory and a bliſs that infinitely ſurpaſs all your preſent conceptions? And you, unregenerate ſinners, though I cannot ſay you are near to glory, yet I may aſſure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its ſolemn wonders: this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your preſent condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miſerable for ever. Therefore,

Fifthly, O ſinners, why do you not labour to become the ſons of God now while you may? Conſider what prodigies of miſery, what monuments of vengeance you will ſoon be, if you continue unregenerate! Alas! ſirs, it does not yet appear what you ſhall ſoon be, otherwiſe you could no more reſt in your preſent caſe than upon the top of a maſt, or upon burning coals. And, poor creatures! have you a mind to be initiated into theſe horrid myſteries of woe, and be taught them by experience? Will not you believe the repeated declarations of eternal truth, that they are intolerably dreadful, and that, till you are the ſons of God, till you are born again, and have the diſpoſitions of children towards him, you cannot have a moment's ſecurity for eſcaping them? Alas! I muſt pity you; and I call upon all the children of God to pour out the tears of their compaſſion over you.

Sixthly, Let me call upon all the ſons of God in this aſſembly to admire his love in conferring this dignity upon them: *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God!* Conſider what you were, guilty, rebellious creatures, condemned to everlaſting tortures; and you will own, that to be juſt delivered from hell, though it has been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favour for you: but for you to be the ſons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be tranſformed into happy ſomethings that you can now form no ideas of, and this too at the expence of the

blood of God; what love is this! Go home, and forget it if you can. I may as well bid you live without breathing if you can.

Seventhly, Let me conclude with this reflection: how honourable, how happy, how glorious are the ſons of God! how immenſe their privileges! how rich their inheritance! Why then are they ſo backward to enter upon it! how unaccountable, how abſurd their eager attachment to this world, and their unwillingneſs to die! Why ſo much afraid of aſcending to their Father's houſe? Why ſo ſhy of glory and bliſs? Why ſo fond of ſlavery and impriſonment? O! my brethren, be always on the wing, ready for flight, and be always looking out, and crying, *Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly.* Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.

A SERMON ON THE NEW YEAR.

JER. xxviii. 16. *This year thou ſhalt die.* *

WHILE we are entering upon the threſhold of a new year it may be proper for us to ſtand, and pauſe, and take a ſerious view of the occurrences that may happen to us this year, that we may be prepared to meet them. Future contingencies are indeed unknown to us; and this ignorance is as agreeable to our preſent ſtate, and as conducive to our improvement and happineſs, as our knowledge of the things which it concerns us to know. But though we cannot predict to ourſelves the particular events that may befal us, yet the events of life in general, in

* This Sermon was preached at the college at Naſſau-Hall, and conſequently to a number of young perſons, Jan. 1, 1761. The Author died the 4th of February following.

in a vague indeterminate view are not ſo contingent and unknowable as to leave no room for rational ſuppoſitions, and probable expectations. There are certain events which regularly happen to us every year, and therefore we may expect them this year. There are others ſometimes occur in the compaſs of a year, and ſometimes do not; ſuch are many of the bleſſings and afflictions of life; of theſe we ſhould be apprehenſive, and prepare for them. And there are events which we know are before us, and we are ſure they will occur: but at what particular time they will happen, whether this year or next, whether this day or to-morrow, is to us an utter uncertainty. Such is that intereſting event the cloſe of the preſent life, and our entrance into eternity. That we muſt die, is as certain as that we now live; but the hour or year when, is kindly and wiſely concealed from us, that we may be always ready, and ſtand in the poſture of conſtant vigilant expectations; that we may not be ſurpriſed. But certainly it becomes us to reflect ſeriouſly upon the mere poſſibility of this event happening this year, and realize to ourſelves thoſe important conſequences that reſult from this ſuppoſition. The mere poſſibility of this may juſtly affect us more than the certain expectation of any other futurity. And it is not only poſſible, but highly probable, death may meet ſome of us within the compaſs of this year. Yes, it is highly probable that if ſome prophet, like Jeremiah, ſhould open to us the book of the divine decrees, one or other of us would there ſee our ſentence, and the time of its execution fixed. *Thus ſaith the Lord—this year thou ſhalt die.* There ſome of us would find it written, 'This year thou ſhalt enjoy a ſeries of proſperity, to try if the goodneſs of God will lead thee to repentance.' Others might read this melancholy line, 'This year ſhall be to thee a ſeries of afflictions; this year thou ſhalt loſe thy deareſt earthly ſupport and comfort; this year thou ſhalt pine away with ſickneſs, or agonize with torturing

torturing pain, to try if the kind severities of a father's rod will reduce thee to thy duty.' Others, I hope, would read the gracious decree, 'This year thy stubborn spirit, after long resistance, shall be sweetly constrained to bow to the despised gospel of Christ. This year shalt thou be born a child of God, and an heir of happiness, which the revolution of years shall never, never terminate.' O happy and glorious event! May we hope this mercy is reserved among the secrets of heaven for any thoughtless impenitent sinner among us! And that the decree will bring forth this year! this year which finds us in a dead sleep, stupidly careless of our everlasting interest, and which, if like the preceding, will be a season of thoughtless impenitence and presumptuous security! Others perhaps would read this tremendous doom, 'This year my spirit, so long resisted, shall cease to strive with thee; this year I will give thee up to thine own heart's lusts, and swear in my wrath thou shalt not enter into my rest.' O! dismal sentence! None can equal it in terror but one, and that is, *depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire:* and the former is an infallible presage of the latter. Others (O! let our souls dwell upon the thought!) would probably find the doom of the false prophet Hananiah pronounced against them: *Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die.*

This year you may die, for your life is the greatest uncertainty in the world. You have no assurance of another year, another day, or even another moment.

This year you may die, because thousands have died since the last new year's day; and this year will be of the same kind with the last; the duration of mortals; a time to die. The causes of death, both in the human constitution and in the world without, will exist and operate in this year as well as in the last.

This year you may die; for thousands of others will die: it is certain they will, and why may not you? What peculiar security have you to confide in?

This

This year you may die, though you are young; for the regions of the dead have been crowded with perſons of your age; and no age is the leaſt ſecurity againſt the ſtroke of death.

This year you may die, though you are now in health and vigour, and your conſtitution ſeems to promiſe a long life; for thouſands of ſuch will be hurried into the eternal world this year, as they have been in years paſt. The principles of death may be even now working within you, notwithſtanding the ſeeming firmneſs of your conſtitution; and you may be a pale, cold, lifeleſs corpſe, ſooner than the invalid whoſe life is apparently near its cloſe.

This year you may die, though you are full of buſineſs, though you have projected many ſchemes, which it may be the work of years to execute, and which afford you many bright and flattering proſpects. Death will not conſult your leiſure, nor be put off till another year, that you may accompliſh your deſigns. Thouſands have died before you, and will die this year amidſt their golden proſpects, and while ſpinning out their eternal ſchemes. And what has happened to them may happen to you.

This year you may die, though you have not yet finiſhed your education, nor fixed in life, but are preparing to appear in the world, and perhaps elated with the proſpect of the figure you will make in it. Many ſuch abortive ſtudents are now in the duſt. Many that had paſſed through a laborious courſe of preparation for public life, and had inſpired their friends, as well as themſelves, with high hopes, have been ſnatched away as they were juſt ſtepping upon the ſtage: and this may be your doom alſo.

This year you may die, though you are not prepared for it. When death ſhows you his warrant under the great ſeal of Heaven, it will be no excuſe to plead, 'I am not ready.' Though the conſequence of your dying unprepared will be your everlaſting ruin, yet that dreadful conſideration will have no weight to delay the execution. This

This year you may die, though you deliberately delay your preparation, and put it off to ſome future time. You may fix upon the next year, or the decline of life, as the ſeaſon for religion; but that time may never be at your diſpoſal. Others may live to ſee it, but you may be ingulphed in the boundleſs ocean of eternity before it arrives, and your time for preparation may be over for ever.

This year you may die, though you are unwilling to admit the thought. Death does not ſlacken his pace towards you, becauſe you hate him, and are afraid of his approach. Your not realizing your latter end as near, does not remove it to a greater diſtance. Think of it or not, you muſt die: your want of thought can be no defence; and you know not how ſoon you may feel what you cannot bear to think of.

This year you may die, though you may ſtrongly hope the contrary, and flatter yourſelf with the expectation of a length of years. You will not perhaps admit the thought of a ſhort abortive life; but notwithſtanding this, you may be a lifeleſs corpſe before this year finiſhes its revolution.

Thus it appears very poſſible, that one or other of us may die this year. Nay, it is very probable, as well as poſſible, if we conſider that it is a very uncommon, and almoſt unprecedented thing, that not one ſhould die in a whole year out of ſuch an aſſembly as this. More than one have died the year paſt, who made a part of our aſſembly laſt new year's day. Therefore let each of us (for we know not on whom the lot may fall) realize this poſſibility, this alarming probability, 'This year I may die.'

And what if you ſhould? Surely you may be ſtartled at this queſtion: for O! the ſurprizing change! O! the important conſequences!

If you ſhould die this year, then all your doubts, all the anxieties of blended hopes and fears about your ſtate and character will terminate for ever in full conviction.

viction. If you are impenitent ſinners, all the artifices of ſelf-flattery will be able to make you hope better things no longer; but the dreadful diſcovery will flaſh upon you with the reſiſtleſs blaze of intuitive evidence. You will ſee, you will feel yourſelves ſuch. If you lie under the condemnation of the divine law, you will no longer be able to flatter yourſelves with better hopes: the execution of the penalty will ſadly convince you of the tremendous truth. To diſpute it would be to diſpute the deepeſt heart-felt ſenſations of the moſt exquiſite miſery. But, on the other hand, if your fears and doubts are the honeſt anxieties of a ſincere, ſelf-diffident heart, ever jealous of itſelf, and afraid of every miſtake in a matter of ſuch vaſt importance, you will meet with the welcome demonſtration of your ſincerity, and of your being unqueſtionably the favourites of Heaven. Senſation will afford you conviction; and you will believe what you ſee. In ſhort, the poſſibility that this year may be your laſt, may be joyful tidings to you. If you die this year, this year you ſhall be in heaven, imparadiſed in the boſom of God. And is it poſſible your ſalvation is ſo near! Tranſporting thought!

It would be eaſy to enumerate ſeveral happy conſequences of death with regard to thoſe who have ſpent their life in preparation for it; and the nearneſs of death, inſtead of ſtriking them with terror, may heighten the tranſport of expectation. It would afford me no ſmall pleaſure to trace thoſe bleſſed conſequences, and it would be an act of kindneſs and compaſſion to the heirs of heaven, many of whom go on mourning and trembling even towards the regions of happineſs, as though they were going to the place of execution, and anticipate but very little of thoſe infinite pleaſures which are ſo near at hand. But I intend to devote the preſent hour chiefly to the ſervice of a part, perhaps the greater part of my hearers, who are in a more dangerous and alarming ſituation,

ſituation, I mean ſuch who may die this year, and yet are not prepared; ſuch who are as near to hell as they are to death, and conſequently ſtand in need of the moſt powerful and immediate applications, leſt they be undone for ever beyond recovery.

To you therefore, my dear brethren, my fellow-mortals, my fellow-candidates for eternity, whoſe everlaſting ſtate hangs in a dread ſuſpenſe, who have a ſecret conviction that you are not qualified for admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven, and who cannot promiſe yourſelves that you ſhall not ſink into the infernal pit this year, but upon this ſuppoſition, which is the moſt precarious and doubtful in the world, namely, that you ſhall live out another year; to you I would addreſs myſelf with affectionate tenderneſs, and yet with plainneſs and pungency. And I beg your moſt ſolemn attention to an affair of infinite moment, to which yet you may not have another year to attend.

This year you may die: and ſhould you die this year, you will be for ever cut off from all the pleaſures of life. Then farewell, an everlaſting farewell to all the mirth and gaiety, the tempting amuſements and vain delights of youth. Farewell to all the pleaſures you derive from the ſenſes, and all the gratifications of appetite. This year the ſun may loſe his luſtre as to you; and all the lovely proſpects of nature may become a diſmal blank. To you muſic may loſe all her charms, and die away into everlaſting ſilence; and all the gratifications of the palate may become inſipid. When you lie in the cold grave, you will be as dead to ſuch ſenſations as the clay that covers you. Then farewell to all the pompous but empty pleaſures of riches and honours. The pleaſures both of enjoyment and expectation from this quarter will fail for ever. But this is not all.

If you ſhould die this year, you will have no pleaſures, no enjoyments to ſubſtitute for thoſe you will loſe. Your capacity and eager thirſt for happineſs will

will continue, nay, will grow more ſtrong and violent in that improved adult ſtate of your nature. And yet you will have no good, real or imaginary, to ſatisfy it; and conſequently the capacity of happineſs will become a capacity of miſery; and the privation of pleaſure will be poſitive pain. Can imagination feign any thing more wretched than a creature formed for the enjoyment of the infinite good, pining away for ever with hungry raging deſires, without the leaſt degree of gratification! baniſhed at once from the ſupreme good, and from all the created enjoyments that were wont to be poorly ſubſtituted in his ſtead! Yet this may be your caſe in the ſhort compaſs of the following year. O! what a terrible change! What a prodigious fall!

Should you die this year, all your hopes and proſpects as to future life will periſh abortive. Several of you now are in a ſtate of education, preparing to enter upon the ſtage of the world; and you are perhaps often pleaſing yourſelves with gay and magnificent dreams about the figure you will make upon it. You may be planning many ſchemes to be accompliſhed in the ſeveral periods of a long life; and are perhaps already anticipating in idea the pleaſure, the profit, or the honour you expect to derive from their execution. In theſe fond hopes your affectionate parents, friends, and teachers concur with generous pleaſure. But, alas! in the ſwift revolution of this beginning year, all theſe ſanguine expectations and pleaſing proſpects may vaniſh into ſmoke. Youth is the ſeaſon of promiſe, full of fair bloſſoms; but theſe fair bloſſoms may wither, and never produce the expected fruits of maturity. It may perhaps be the deſign of Heaven, that, after all the flattering hopes and projects, and after all the pains and expence of a liberal education, you ſhall never appear upon the public ſtage; or that you ſhall vaniſh away like a phantom, as ſoon as you make your appearance. Certainly then you ſhould extend your proſpects beyond the limits

of mortality; extend them into that world, where you will live to execute them, without the risk of a disappointment! Otherwise,

If you die this year, you will not only be cut off from all the flattering prospects of this life, but from all hope entirely, and for ever. If you die in your sins, you will be fixed in an unchangeable state of misery; a state that will admit of no expectation but that of uniform, or rather ever-growing misery; a state that excludes all hopes of making a figure, except as the monuments of the vindictive justice of God, and the deadly effects of sin. How affecting is the idea of a promising youth cut off from the land of the living useless and hopeless in both worlds! fallen from the summit of hope into the gulph of everlasting despair! Yet this may be your doom, my dear youth, your doom this very year, if you should die in your sins.

If you should die this year, then all the ease and pleasure you now derive from thoughtlessness, self-flattery, and suppressing the testimony of your consciences, will forever be at an end. You will then be obliged to view yourselves in a just light, and to know the very worst of your condition. The secret plaudits of self-flattery will be for ever silenced, and conscience will recover itself from that state of insensibility into which you have cast it by repeated violences, and, as exasperated by your ill treatment, it will become your everlasting tormentor; it will do nothing but accuse and upbraid you for ever: you will never more be able to entertain so much as one favourable thought of yourselves. And what a wretched state will this be! for a man to be self-condemned! to disapprove of his whole past conduct! to be pleased with nothing in himself, but heartily, though with horror, to concur in the comdemning sentence of the supreme Judge, and the whole creation! to esteem himself a fool, a sinner, a mean sordid wretch; an enemy to himself, and the whole universe;

verſe; a ſelf-deſtroyer, an outcaſt from all happineſs, and from the ſociety of all happy beings; an unlovely, odious, uſeleſs, miſerable, deſpairing creature for ever! O miſerable ſituation! Does it not alarm you to think you may be ſo near it?

If you ſhould die this year, you will be deprived for ever of all the means of ſalvation. All theſe are confined to the preſent life, and have no place in the world of eternal puniſhment. There the thunders of the divine law roar; but the gentle voice of the goſpel never ſounds. There the Lion of the tribe of Judah rends the prey; but never exhibits himſelf as a Lamb that was ſlain, an atonement for ſin, and the Saviour of the guilty. There conſcience exerts its power, not to excite the medicinal anguiſh of kindly repentance, but the hopeleſs horrors of everlaſting deſpair. There Jehovah works, but not to enable the ſinner to work out his own ſalvation, but to touch all the ſprings of painful ſenſation, and open all the ſources of miſery in the criminal. There Mercy no more diſtributes her bounties, but Juſtice reings in her awful rigours. There the ſanctifying ſpirit no more communicates his purifying, all-healing influences, but Sin, the great Apollyon, diffuſes its deadly poiſon. In a word, when you leave this ſtate of trial, all the diſcipline of the preſent ſtate, all your advantages for ſalvation, all the means of grace, and all the encouragements of hope will be for ever removed out of your reach; and conſequently all poſſibility of your ſalvation will ceaſe for ever; for when the neceſſary means are taken away, the end becomes utterly impoſſible. Therefore,

If you ſhould die this year, all your hopes of heaven will vaniſh for ever. No more happineſs for you! You have received your portion in this life, a few years of ſordid, unſatisfactory happineſs; and an entire eternity of miſery, permanent, exquiſite, conſummate miſery follows behind! No more honour for you, but ſhame and everlaſting contempt. No more intellectual

intellectual amuſements! no more pleaſing ſtudies! no more gentle beams of ſcience! but the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever! intenſe poring upon your hopeleſs wretchedneſs! tormenting recollections of your paſt folly and madneſs in voluntarily ruſhing into the pit! No agreeable companion! no ſympathizing friend! no relaxation! no pleaſing exerciſe! no encouraging proſpects! no comforting reviews! no friendly intercourſe with heaven! no token of love, no gift of grace from the Father of mercy! none of the conſcious joys of ſelf-approbation! no hope in the future! no relief from the paſt! no refuge, no eſcape, at the expence of exiſtence, into the gulph of annihilation! but above, an angry God and a loſt heaven! behind, a miſ-ſpent life and opportunities of ſalvation irrecoverably loſt! within, a guilty remorſeful conſcience, an implacable ſelf-tormentor! around, malignant enraged ghoſts, mutual tormentors! before, an eternity of hopeleſs miſery, extending infinitely beyond the ken of ſight! O! tremendous doom! who can bear the thought?

And is it poſſible it ſhould be ſo near to any of us? Where is the unhappy creature, that we may all drop our tears over him? Where is he? Rather, where is he not? An impenitent ſinner is almoſt every where to be found; and that is the wretched creature who ſtands every moment upon the ſlippery brink of this horrible precipice; and this year, nay this hour, for what mortals or angels know, he may be thrown down, ingulphed and loſt for ever.

And is this a ſafe ſituation for you, thoughtleſs, fool-hardy mortals! Does it become you in ſuch a ſituation to be cheerful, merry, and gay; or buſy, reſtleſs, and laborious in the purſuits of this tranſitory life? Does it become you to dread nothing but the diſaſters and calamities of the preſent ſtate, or ſpin out your eternal ſchemes of grandeur, riches, or pleaſure, in hopes to accompliſh them within the narrow uncertain limits of time allotted to you? Alas! before

fore another year has run its hafty round, the world and all that it contains, all its purfuits and enjoyments, all its cares and forrows, may be as infignificant to you as the grandeur of Cæfar, or the riches of the world before the flood. Earthly riches or poverty, liberty or flavery, honour or difgrace, joy or forrow, ficknefs or health, may in this year become as little your concern, and be as much nothing to you as to your coffin, or the duft that fhall cover it, or to Judas that has been gone to his own place above feventeen hundred years.

Does it not rather become you to turn your thoughts to another inquiry, 'Is it poffible for me to efcape this impending danger? Where, how, whence may I obtain deliverance?' If you are not defirous ferioufly to attend to this inquiry, it will be to no purpofe for me to folve it: to you it will appear as a folemn trifle, or an impertinent epifode. But if you will lay it to heart, if you will, as it were, give me your word that you will pay a proper regard to it, I fhall enter upon the folution with the utmoft alacrity.

I affure you then, in the firft place, your cafe is not yet defperate, unlefs you choofe to make it fo; that is, unlefs you choofe to perfift in careleffnefs and impenitence, as you have hitherto done. If you now begin to think ferioufly upon your condition, to break off from your fins, and attend in good earneft upon the means appointed for your falvation, there is hope concerning you; yes, miferable finners! there is hope that this year, which now finds you in fo deplorable a ftate, will introduce you into another, under the bleffing of Heaven, fafe from all danger, and entitled to everlafting happinefs.

I prefume you all know fo well the external means you fhould ufe for your falvation, that I need not particularly direct you to them. You all know that prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, meditation upon divine things, free conference with fuch as

as have been taught by experience to direct you in this difficult work; you all know, I say, that these are the means instituted for your conversion: and if you had right views of things, and a just temper towards them, you would hardly need instruction or the least persuasion to make use of them. But to give you such views, and inspire you with such a temper, this is the difficulty. O! that I knew how to undertake it with success! I can only give you such directions as appear to me proper and salutary; but it is the almighty power of God alone that can give them force and efficacy.

You must learn to think, to think seriously and solemnly upon your danger, and the necessity of a speedy escape. You must retire from the crowd, from talk, dissipation, business, and amusement, and converse with yourselves alone in pensive solitude.

You must learn to think patiently upon subjects the most melancholy and alarming, your present guilt and depravity, and your dreadful doom so near at hand, if you continue in your present condition. The mind, fond of ease, and impatient of such mortifying and painful thoughts, will recoil, and fly off, and seek for refuge in every trifle: but you must arrest and confine it to these disagreeable subjects; you must force upon it this medicinal pain, as you often force your stomach, when your health requires it. There is not any moroseness in this advice; no ill-natured design upon your pleasure and happiness. On the other hand, it is intended to procure you more pleasure and happiness than you can possibly obtain any other way: it is intended to prevent many sorrowful days and years, nay a complete eternity of misery. The alternative proposed to you is not, Whether you shall feel the bitter anguish of repentance, or not; whether you shall be pensive and serious, or not; whether you shall think upon gloomy and alarming subjects, or not: This is not at all the state of the case; for you must feel the sorrows of repentance;

repentance; you must be thoughtful and pensive; you must confine your minds to subjects of terror: you must, whether you will or not; it is utterly unavoidable. But the only alternative proposed to your choice is, Whether you will voluntarily submit to the kindly, hopeful, medicinal, preventive sorrows of repentance in this state of trial, which will issue in everlasting joy; or be forced to submit to the despairing pangs, and useless destructive horrors of too late a repentance in the eternal world; which will only torment you, but not save you; which will be your punishment, and not a mean of your reformation, or a preparative for happiness. Whether you will confine your thoughts for a time to the contemplation of your present miserable circumstances, while hope irradiates even the darkest gloom of discouragement, and the gospel opens such bright and inviting prospects beyond those melancholy views that now first present themselves to your thoughts; or whether you will choose to pine away a doleful eternity in sullen, intense, hopeless porings upon your remediless misery, in pale reviews of past folly, and shocking surveys of endless ages of woe before you. This is the true state of the case; and can you be at a loss what choice to make! Does not the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, of self-interest and self-love, as well as the voice of God, direct you to choose a few serious, sad, solemn, sorrowful, penitent hours now, rather than to invert the choice, and to purchase a few hours of presumptuous ease at the expence of a wretched, despairing eternity? O choose life, that you may live. While you indulge a trifling levity of mind, and a roving dissipation of thought, there is no hope you will ever seriously attend to your most important interest, or use the means of grace in earnest. Hence it is that I have made it so much my endeavour to-day to make you serious and thoughtful. To enforce this, let me repeat what I think cannot but have some effect; especially as it comes

comes not from the prieſthood, but the court; and from a courtier as eminent as England ever boaſted.

'Ah! my friends! while we laugh, all things are 'ſerious round about us. God is ſerious, who exer-'ciſeth patience towards us: Chriſt is ſerious, who 'ſhed his blood for us: the Holy Ghoſt is ſerious 'who ſtriveth againſt the obſtinacy of our hearts: 'the holy Scriptures bring to our ears the moſt ſe-'rious things in the world: the holy Sacraments re-'preſent the moſt ſerious and awful matters: the 'whole creation is ſerious in ſerving God and us: 'all that are in heaven or hell are ſerious:—How 'then can we be gay?'

I pray you, my dear brethren, yield an immediate compliance. Do not delay this great affair for another year, till you are ſure you ſhall live another year. You may perhaps have time enough before you to work out your ſalvation, if you immediately begin to improve it; but, if you loiter, you may periſh for want of time; the riches of the world will not be able then to redeem one of thoſe precious hours you now ſquander away.

Let me now make you one of the moſt reaſonable, ſalutary, and advantageous propoſals that heaven itſelf can make to you; and that is, That you endeavour to enter upon this new year as new creatures. Let the old man with his affections and luſts die with the old year. *Let the time paſt of your life more than ſuffice you to have wrought the will of the fleſh. What profit had you then in thoſe things of which you ſhould now be aſhamed?* How ſhocking the thought that your old guilt ſhould follow you into the new year, and haunt you in future times! O begin this year as you would wiſh to end your life! Begin it ſo as to give hopes that your future time will be ſo ſpent as to render death harmleſs, and even welcome to you.

Let the poſſibility ſuggeſted in my text have due weight with you; This year you may die.

But

But perhaps ſome of you may be inverting this conſideration, and whiſpering to yourſelves, 'This 'year I may not die:' and therefore there is no immediate neceſſity of preparation for death. But what if you ſhould not die this year, if you ſtill delay the great work for which your time is given you? Alas! if you perſiſt in this, one would think it can give you but little pleaſure whether you die this year or not? What end will your life anſwer, but to add to your guilt, and increaſe your puniſhment? What ſafety can another year afford you, when you muſt die at laſt? What valuable end do you intend to anſwer in future life? Do you purpoſe to ſpend this year as you have done your paſt years? What! in offending your God! abuſing his mercies! neglecting the precious ſeaſons of grace! hardening yourſelves more and more in impenitence! adding ſin to ſin, and treaſuring up wrath againſt the day of wrath! Is it worth your while to live for ſuch horrid, prepoſterous purpoſes as theſe? Can you wiſh for another year with theſe views? Could you venture to pray for it? Will the prayer bear to be put into words? Come, put on the hardineſs of an infernal ghoſt, that you may be able to ſupport yourſelves under the horror of the ſound. 'Thou ſupreme Excellence! Thou 'Author of my being, and all my powers! Thou 'Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge 'of the world! I have ſpent ten, twenty, or thirty 'years in diſpleaſing thee and ruining myſelf; but 'I am not yet ſatisfied with the pleaſures of ſuch a 'conduct. Grant me, I pray thee, another year to 'ſpend in the ſame manner. Grant me more mer-'cies to abuſe; more time to miſpend; more means 'of grace to neglect and profane.' Could you now fall on your knees, and preſent ſuch petitions to Heaven? Surely you could not. Surely your frame would ſhudder; nay, would not the heavens gather blackneſs, and the earth tremble at the ſound! But have your temper and practice no language. Language

expreſſes the thoughts and intentions of the mind; and are not the habitual temper and practice a more certain diſcovery of the thoughts and intentions than mere words? Words, which may be ſpoken without a thought, or in a paſſion, and which may ſoon be heartily retracted. But the temper and practice is a ſteady and ſure rule of judging, and deciſive of a man's predominant character. Therefore, while your temper and practice are agreeable to ſuch a prayer; that is, while you are diſpoſed to ſpend your time that God gives you in ſin and impenitence, you are perpetually inſulting Heaven with ſuch petitions, and that too in a manner much more expreſſive and ſtrong than if you ſhould utter them in words. And can you quietly bear the thought of this horrid blaſphemy, which you are conſtantly breathing out againſt Heaven? Can you wiſh and pray for another year for this purpoſe? What though you ſhould not die this year? Will this exempt you from death in another, or from the puniſhment of a miſpent life? Alas! no; this will only render you a greater criminal, and a more miſerable wretch in eternity. One year of ſinning will make a dreadful addition to your account.

Therefore conclude, every one for himſelf, 'It is 'of little importance to me whether I die this year, 'or not; but the only important point is, that I 'make a good uſe of my future time, whether it be 'longer or ſhorter.' This, my brethren, is the only way to ſecure a happy new year; a year of time, that will lead the way to an happy eternity.

SERMON

SERMON XXXV.

AN ENROLMENT OF OUR NAMES IN HEAVEN, THE NOBLEST SOURCE OF JOY.

LUKE x. 20. *Notwithſtanding, in this rejoice not, that the ſpirits are ſubject to you; but rather rejoice becauſe your names are written in heaven.* *

THIS is the anſwer Chriſt gave to his diſciples, when returned from their miſſion, flushed with victory over the moſt mighty and moſt malignant enemies, the infernal powers. *Lord*, ſay they, *even the devils are ſubject to us, through thy name.* This they probably mentioned with a tincture of vanity, and were ſecretly proud of their new power, which their Maſter had given them. Though they owned it was his gift, they gloried in it, as conferring ſome new honour and dignity upon themſelves. And probably, like the reſt of their countrymen, their heads were filled with notions of the temporal kingdom of the Meſſiah, and his conqueſts over the other nations of the earth in favour of the Jews; and inferred that they ſhould have an irreſiſtible power over their enemies on earth, from the power they had been enabled to exerciſe over evil ſpirits, ſo much more mighty, and ſeemingly unconquerable.

Their Lord and Maſter, among other things in his anſwer, checks this ſecret vanity, and points out to them a ſuperior cauſe of joy. *Rejoice not in this*; that is, rejoice not ſo much as you do, rejoice not principally in this, *that the ſpirits* (that is evil ſpirits) *are ſubject to you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your names are written in heaven;* as if he ſhould ſay, "Though you

* A Sermon preached at Hanover, in Virginia, Jan. 14, 1759.

you may ſafely rejoice in the victory you have obtained through my name over the powers of hell, yet you ought to take care that it be not a vain, ſelfiſh, carnal joy, a joy ſpringing from the gratification of your own ambition. And take care alſo, that it does not run into exceſs: for I will ſhew you a much greater cauſe of joy than even this; and that is, that your names are written in heaven. It is poſſible, that while you are caſting the devil out of the bodies of others, your own ſouls may be under his power, and you may be his miſerable ſlaves for ever. But ſince your names are written in heaven, you are ſafe; and that is cauſe of joy indeed. Rejoice in this above all other things."

How ſhould we rejoice, and perhaps boaſt, if the mighty powers of hell were ſubject unto us, and we could make them fly at a word! But the meaneſt chriſtian is more happy than this, and has cauſe of greater joy.

For the farther explication of the text, it is only neceſſary to inquire, What is meant by their names being written in heaven?

Heaven is here compared to a city or corporation, in which a liſt or record is kept of all the citizens or freemen who are entitled to its privileges and immunities. And therefore, to have our names written in heaven, ſignifies, to be citizens, or freemen of the heavenly city; that is, to have a right to an inheritance there, and to all its privileges and enjoyments.

This naturally ſuggeſts a very important inquiry, the deciſion of which may hold us all in an anxious ſuſpenſe: "How may I know (may each of us aſk) whether my unworthy name be written in heaven? who can open and read the records of heaven, and ſhew me whether my name is regiſtered there?"

I anſwer, This is a ſecret that may be diſcovered; for all that have their names written in heaven, may be diſtinguiſhed by their characters, their temper, and

and practice, while upon earth. And their characters are ſuch as theſe.

1. They are deeply ſenſible of the vanity of all earthly things, and that heaven alone is a ſufficient portion and happineſs. All that are regiſtered as citizens of the heavenly Jeruſalem have a ſuperlative eſteem of that privilege, and count all things but loſs in compariſon of it. Matt. vii. 24—26. and xiii. 45, 46. And is this your character? Are your hearts in heaven? or are your higheſt affections confined to the earth?

2. All that have their names written in heaven have a heavenly nature; a nature very different from that of the men of this world, and like that of the citizens of heaven. And is this your temper? or is it earthly and ſenſual?

3. All that have their names written in heaven. have a peculiar love for all their fellow-citizens, who are heirs of heaven. They love them as members of the ſame corporation with themſelves. 1 John iii. 14.

4. If your names are written in heaven, it is the chief buſineſs and concern of your life to obtain an intereſt in heaven. This is not the object of languid, lazy wiſhes, or of lukewarm, ſpiritleſs prayers; but of your vigorous, anxious, perſevering deſires. And do you thus ſeek the kingdom of heaven? Matt. x. 12. Luke xvi. 16.

Theſe marks muſt ſuffice at preſent to aſſiſt you in ſelf-examination; and I beg you would bring them to your hearts, and ſee if they will ſtand this teſt.

If your names are written in heaven, then my text authorizes me to tell you, this is the greateſt cauſe of joy you can poſſible have; a joy that may ſwallow up every other joy. But on the other hand,

If your names are not written in heaven, there is nothing in the world that can happen to you, that can be a cauſe of rational, laſting joy to you.

I. If your names are written in heaven, this is the greateſt cauſe of joy you can poſſible have; a joy that

that may swallow up every other joy.—This will appear by an induction of particulars.

Are you rich in this world? Has God blessed your industry and frugality, so that you are in easy, affluent circumstances? This is cause of joy and gratitude to God, as it furnishes you with the materials of earthly happiness, frees you from many anxieties and painful wants, and puts it in you power to enjoy the generous pleasure of doing good with your substance. But what is this, when compared with the blessing of the sanctified use of riches, and the assurance that God has given you, that all things shall work together for your good! what is this to the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that fulness of grace and glory, in which you have an interest! Rejoice more in this than in thousands of gold and silver.

Or if you are not in affluent circumstances, are you above extreme want, and able by your labour and industry to provide yourselves and your dependents with the necessaries of life? This is the happiness of most, even of the poor in our country: and this is cause of joy. But what is this to the happiness of having provision made for your subsistence thro' everlasting ages! Is it not superior cause of joy, that when you are stript of all the enjoyments of the present life, you shall also be delivered from all its wants and labours, and shall not only have a bare sufficiency, but a rich overflowing abundance of happiness, equal to the capacities of your souls in their highest enlargements. In this you may warrantably rejoice, and you cannot run into excess.

Do you enjoy health of body? In this rejoice: but how trifling a cause of joy is this to that of your souls being in health and prospering, and bearing the symptoms of immortal life and vigour?

Are your bodies free from diabolical possession? Rejoice not so much in this, but rather rejoice that the devil is cast out of your souls, and that you are not under his spiritual tyranny.

Are

Are you happy in your friends and relations, and every domeſtic bleſſing? Rejoice not ſo much in this as that you have the moſt honourable relations and friends in heaven. God is your father; Chriſt is your Saviour, your elder Brother, your Friend; the Holy Ghoſt is your Sanctifier; the angels and all the ſaints are your fellow-ſervants, your brethren of the ſame houſhold of God.

Do you rejoice in the ſalvation of your country, and that you are delivered from the hands of your ſavage and perfidious enemies on earth? Rather rejoice that you are delivered from the tyranny of ſin and Satan, and from the condemnation of the divine law.

Do you rejoice that our forces have been victorious over our enemies? Rather rejoice in the victory which the Captain of your ſalvation has gained for you over your ſpiritual enemies. Rather rejoice in the victory you are enabled to gain over ſin, Satan, and the world, through the blood of the Lamb. Rather rejoice to ſee your luſts ſlain, or at leaſt mortally wounded, and dying in your hearts.

Do you rejoice that you have the proſpect of living in ſafety and peace in your country? Rather rejoice that you have peace of conſcience, and peace with God, through Jeſus Chriſt; and that you ſhall enter into everlaſting peace whenever you leave this reſtleſs world.

Do you rejoice that your earthly poſſeſſions, your property and liberty are ſafe? Rather rejoice that your heavenly inheritance is ſafe; and that whatever becomes of the kingdoms of the earth, you have a kingdom that cannot be ſhaken, eternal in the heavens.

Do you rejoice that you live under the government of a good king? and that you enjoy the bleſſings of our happy conſtitution? This is a peculiar happineſs indeed; but rejoice not ſo much in this, as that you are the ſubjects of the King of kings, and under

under a dispensation of grace, and the government of a Mediator. *The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice.* Psalm xcvii. 1. Rejoice, above all, in this, that you and all your affairs are under the direction of a divine hand, that will manage all for your good. Rejoice that ere long you shall be admitted to the court of the heavenly King, and see him in all his glory.

Do you rejoice that your life is prolonged, while so many are dropping into the grave around you? Rather rejoice that you are not to live always in this most wretched world. Rejoice that death itself, your last enemy, will not be able to do you any lasting injury, but only convey you home to your Father's house, and the full possession of your heavenly inheritance.

Do you rejoice that you enjoy the gospel and the means of salvation, and that these invaluable blessings are not likely to be torn from you by the hands of Indian savages and Popish idolaters? This indeed is cause of rejoicing; but how much more ought you to rejoice that the gospel and the means of salvation are made effectual by divine grace for your conversion and sanctification! Many enjoy them as well as you, to whom they are of no service, but an occasion of more aggravated guilt and ruin.

Let me therefore persuade you to rejoice, not only as a privilege, but as a duty. God enjoins it upon you by the same authority by which he requires you to pray, or to love himself or your neighbour. *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.* Psalm. xxxii. 11. *Rejoice evermore: rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice.* 1 Thess. v. 16. It is decent and congruous that you should now rejoice in that, in which you shall rejoice for ever. And, on the other hand, it is highly unbecoming that you should walk towards heaven melancholy and dejected, as if you were going to the place of execution. Let sinners be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, who stand every moment

moment on the ſlippery brink of eternal miſery. Sorrow and lamentation become their circumſtances. But will you always mourn and droop, who ſtand every moment on the threſhold of heaven, and know not but you may be there before another ſun ſhall riſe? how indecent is this! Therefore rejoice with all your hearts, that your worthleſs names are written in heaven. This is greater cauſe of joy than if they were regiſtered in the annals of fame, or among princes of the blood royal.

And do not excuſe yourſelves from this agreeable duty, by ſaying, "I would rejoice, if I were ſure my name is written in heaven: but, alas! I am not." For is not this uncertainty your own fault? the effect of your own negligence? Beſides have you not ſome cheerful hopes and probabilities, and even ſome tranſient aſſurance? and is not this cauſe of joy to creatures that deſerve to be left under the pangs of everlaſting deſpair?

Let me advance a ſtep farther, and tell you, that you ſhould rejoice that your names are written in heaven, not only more than in all other cauſes of joy, but alſo in oppoſition to all cauſes of ſorrow.

What though you are poor in this world, when the heavenly inheritance is yours? That you are deſpiſed among men, when you have the honour of being the ſons of God? That you are weak, or ſick and pained in body, when your ſouls are recovering from the deadly diſeaſe of ſin? That your are the ſlaves of men, when you are free of the heavenly city, members of the ſame corporation with the armies of heaven, and ſharers in the liberty of the ſons of God? That your enemies ſhould prove victorious over you upon earth, when you ſhall certainly overcome at laſt? That your mortal relations and friends die, when your heavenly Father and all your ſpiritual kindred live, and you cannot be bereaved of them? In ſhort, what though you endure all the afflictions that can crowd upon one man in the preſent life,

when they are all ſhort and tranſitory, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and when you will ſoon arrive in the land of reſt, beyond the reach of every miſery? In ſpite of all theſe calamities, rejoice; *rejoice and be exceeding glad, ſince your names are written in heaven.*

But I muſt proceed to addreſs another claſs of hearers; and to them I muſt ſay,

II. If your names are not written in heaven, you can have no cauſe of ſolid, rational, and laſting joy in any thing. This alſo I ſhall illuſtrate by an induction of particulars.

Rejoice not that you are rich, or at leaſt enjoy the comforts of life, while you are deſtitute of ſpiritual and everlaſting riches. Will it be any pleaſure to you to paſs from a ſplendid well-furniſhed houſe into the regions of horror and darkneſs? From faring ſumptuouſly every day, to ſuffer the extremities of eternal want? From gay and merry company, to the ſociety of the loſt ſpirits in hell? From all the luxuries of life, to weep, and wail, and gnaſh the teeth for ever? From wearing ſilks, and laces, and every form of finery, to be wrapt in ſheets of infernal flame? Alas! what joy can you take in all the advantages that riches can give you, while you muſt be ſtript of them all ſo ſoon, and feel a terrible reverſe? Many who are ſtiled worſhipful, honourable, and hear nothing but titles of dignity among men, are vile, deſpicable creatures in the ſight of God, and muſt ere long ſink into ſhame and everlaſting contempt. Many a body adorned with whatever riches can procure, is animated by a poor worthleſs ſoul, full of ſin, and void of the beauties of holineſs. And can you rejoice in ſuch trifles as theſe? A man that has a gangrened foot may as well rejoice that it is covered with a ſilken plaiſter; or a criminal, that he is carried to the gallows in a coach of ſtate.

Beſides, remember, how hardly ſhall rich men enter into the kingdom of God! It is an human impoſſibility;

poſſibility; but it is not impoſſible to Omnipotence. As riches increaſe, temptations increaſe; temptations to love the world more, and to think leſs of heaven; temptations from pride, flattery, hurry, company, &c. And can you rejoice that your ſalvation is made more difficult? that you, who are apt to ſtumble at ſtraws, have mountains thrown up in your way? Alas! if this were rightly conſidered, would the wealthy and affluent be ſo reſolute and eager in the purſuit of riches?

What though you are in good buſineſs, and proſpering in the world, while you are not doing the work of your ſalvation, nor carrying on a trade for heaven, and your hurry of buſineſs is a great occaſion of this pernicious neglect?

What though you enjoy health of body, while your ſouls are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and your health is no ſecurity againſt death or hell? What though you enjoy friends and relatives, while the great God is your enemy? Or mirth and pleaſure, when they will end in eternal howlings, and you will be upbraided with them another day, like Dives, *Son, remember, that thou in thy life-time didſt enjoy thy good things?*

What though the French and Indians are routed? alas! the devil and your ſins are ſtill lords over you! What though your country is ſafe, when you ſhall ſtay in it but a very little time, and you have no place prepared for you in heaven? What though you are the free-born deſcendants of Britons, and never were in bondage to any man? alas! you are the ſlaves of ſin. What though you live under the government of the beſt of kings, while you are the captives of the prince of darkneſs, and the King of heaven is your enemy? What though your bodies are not expoſed to the ſword of your fellow-mortals, when you are liable every moment to the ſword of divine juſtice? What though you are ſafe as to your outward eſtate, when your immortal ſouls are in danger?

danger? *What ſhall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?* or to enjoy the goſpel, while you receive no advantage from it, but abuſe it to your more aggravated ruin? What avails it that God is merciful, when you have no ſhare in his mercy, and never will, if you continue in your vain carnal joy? that Chriſt died for ſinners, while you wilfully exclude yourſelves from the bleſſed effects of his death?

In ſhort, what upon earth, or even in heaven, can afford you any pleaſure or rational joy, while your names are not written in heaven, and you are not uſing earneſt endeavours to be admitted citizens there? alas! your caſe calls for ſighs, and tears, and ſorrow, rather than joy. What have you to do with politics, news, and the fate of armies and kingdoms, while you know not whether you will be out of hell one day longer?

And as the joy of the righteous in having their names written in heaven may ſwallow every other joy, ſo your ſorrow, on account of your names not being written there, may ſwallow up all other ſorrows. Be ſorrowful on this account, above all other things.

Have you loſt your friends, your relatives, your eſtate? This is ſad; but O! it is nothing to the loſs of God, of heaven, and your ſouls. All will be loſt ere long, if you continue in your preſent condition. Are you poor in this world? That is but a trifling affliction, compared with that everlaſting poverty you muſt ere long ſuffer. Are you mean and deſpiſed by men? Alas! what is that to your being deſpiſed and abhorred by the God that made you? Are you the ſlaves of men? This would be trifling, and you need not care for it, were it not that you are ſlaves to ſin and Satan, and under the condemnation of the divine law. Are you diſordered in body? That is nothing to the diſorders of your ſouls. Are you afraid of natural death? alas! what is that to ſpiritual death, which has ſeized your ſouls, and the eternal death which

which is but juſt before you? In ſhort, nothing in all the world ought ſo to diſtreſs and grieve you as this, That your names are not written in heaven.

Therefore, inſtead of vain rejoicing, and mirth, and gaiety, I muſt read to you the denunciation of Jeſus Chriſt againſt you; *But wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your conſolation. Wo unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn and weep.* Luke vi. 24, 25.— and call upon you as the apoſtle James does, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miſeries that ſhall come upon you.* James v. 9. And again, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heavineſs.* James iv. 9.

I can honeſtly aſſure you, I am no enemy to the pleaſures of mankind. But it is becauſe I love you that I wiſh you may return home ſad and ſorrowful from this place; for I well know, you are for ever undone, unleſs you turn to the Lord; and that you never will turn to him, without rending of your hearts, weeping, and mourning. Joel ii. 12.

If your joy and mirth were rational, I ſhould ſay nothing againſt it; but is it not frenzy and madneſs to be merry in the chains of ſin, under the wrath of God, and upon the brink of eternal ruin?

Is it not alſo diſhonourable to God? It is as if you ſhould tell him to his face, that you can be merry and happy without his favour, and that you care nothing for his diſpleaſure.

I ſhould not reprove your mirth, if it were harmleſs; but, alas! it will ruin you if you indulge it. For, let me tell you, ſuch ſinners as you cannot become converts, without alarming fears and deep ſorrows. Without this you never will be in earneſt in your religious endeavours.

You will tell me perhaps, "you ſee chriſtians cheerful, and ſometimes merry; and why may not you be ſo?" I anſwer (1.) There is a great difference in your caſe and theirs; they have a lively hope of everlaſting

everlasting happiness; but you can have no hope in your present condition. And may not they rejoice, while you have cause to mourn and weep? What would you think of a criminal under condemnation, if he allowed himself in that mirth and amusement, which may be lawful and becoming in others? (2.) The Christians you know now are cheerful with good reason; but did you know any of them under their first convictions? were they cheerful then? then, when they received a sight of their sin and danger, and were in an awful suspense what would be their everlasting doom? Were they merry and gay while they saw themselves without a Saviour, and under the displeasure of God? No; then all was sadness, fear, and sorrow. And this is what your case now requires. Can you expect the same cheerfulness in one under the power of a deadly disorder as in one recovering? or would it be becoming?

Finally, I should not endeavour to damp your joys and turn them into sorrow, if they would last. But Oh! they will soon end, and nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will succeed. Look down into that hideous gulph, the prison of divine justice, where Dives and Judas, and thousands of sinners lie; and can you see no cheerful look, or hear one laugh among them? No, no: they have done with all joy; and must spend a miserable eternity in grief and tears. And will you not rather mourn in time, than mourn for ever? will you choose now to receive your consolation? or will you not rather delay it till you have reason to rejoice?

To conclude: Suffer a friend to your best interests to prevail upon you to return home this evening sadly pensive and sorrowful, and to resolve you will never indulge yourselves in one hour's mirth and gaiety, till you have some reason to believe that your names are written in heaven. This is what your own interest requires; and if you refuse, you will unavoidably be sorry for it for ever, when your sorrow can

can be of no ſervice to you. Betake yourſelves in ſerious ſadneſs to the earneſt uſe of all the means of ſalvation, and you have reaſon to hope God will have mercy upon you, and turn you to himſelf. Then you will have reaſon to rejoice, to rejoice in your temporal bleſſings, and eſpecially becauſe your names are written in heaven. And then God, and Chriſt, and angels will rejoice over you, and join in your joy.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL BY THE DIVINE POWER UPON THE SOULS OF MEN.*

2 Cor. x. 4, 5. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of ſtrong-holds; caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.*

THIS reſtleſs world is now in an unuſual ferment; kingdom riſing up againſt kingdom, and nation againſt nation: magazines filling, arms brightening, cannons roaring, and human blood ſtreaming, both by ſea and land. Theſe things engroſs the thoughts and converſation of mankind, and alarm their fears and anxieties. But there is another kind of war carrying on in the world; a war, the iſſue of which is of infinitely greater importance; a war of near ſix thouſand years ſtanding; that is, ever ſince the firſt grand rebellion of mankind againſt God; a war in which we are all engaged as parties, and in the reſult of which our immortal intereſt is concerned; though, alas! it engages but little of the attention

* A Sermon preached at Hanover, in Virginia, October 17, 1756.

attention and ſolicitude of the generality among us; I mean, the war which Jeſus Chriſt has been carrying on from age to age by the miniſtry of the goſpel, to reduce the rebellious ſons of men to their duty, and redeem them into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God, from their wretched captivity to ſin and Satan. This is the deſign in which the apoſtles were embarked, and which St. Paul deſcribes in the military ſtyle in my text. As ſome members of the Corinthian church had taken up a very low opinion of St. Paul, his deſign in the context is to raiſe the dignity of his apoſtolic office. And for that purpoſe, he deſcribes in the military language the efficacy and ſucceſs of thoſe apoſtolic powers with which he was furniſhed for the propagation of chriſtianity, and the reduction of the world into obedience to the goſpel. Thoſe powers were ſuch as theſe; the power of working miracles to atteſt his divine commiſſion; the preaching of the doctrine of the croſs, and the rod of diſcipline for the reformation of offenders; which in the hands of the apoſtles, ſeems to have been attended with the power of inflicting temporal judgments, and particularly bodily ſickneſſes; and which St. Paul here threatens to exerciſe upon ſuch of the Corinthians as continued obſtinate in their oppoſition to his miniſtry.

Theſe powers he here calls weapons of war. This tent-maker and a few fiſhermen were ſent out upon a grand expedition, in oppoſition to the united powers of Jews and Gentiles, of earth and hell. All the world, with their gloomy god, were ready to join againſt them. They were ready to oppoſe them with all the force of phi'oſophy, learning, authority, threatenings, and all the cruel forms of perſecution. For the chriſtian cauſe, in which theſe ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt were engaged was contrary to their luſts and prejudices, their honour, and ſecular intereſts. This oppoſition of the world to the goſpel, the apoſtle alſo deſcribes in the military ſtyle. Their luſts, prejudices, and

and intereſts, their vain imaginations and falſe reaſonings, are ſo many ſtrong-holds and high things or caſtles in which they, as it were, fortify and entrench themſelves. Theſe they hold and garriſon under the prince of darkneſs; in theſe they ſtand out in their rebellion againſt heaven, and fight againſt God, againſt his goſpel, and againſt their own conſciences. And with what weapons did the apoſtles attack theſe rebels in their ſtrong-holds? Not with carnal weapons, ſuch as the heroes and conquerors of the world are wont to uſe, but with weapons of a ſpiritual nature, the force of evidence and conviction, the purity of their doctrines and lives, the terrors of the Lord, and the all-conquering love of a dying Saviour. With theſe weapons they encountered the allied powers of men and devils; with theſe they propagated the religion of their Maſter; and not with the ſword, like Mahomet; or with the bloody artillery of perſecution, like the church of Rome; or by the dragoonade, like the tyrants of France.

What unpromiſing weapons were theſe? What avails the light of evidence in a world that loves darkneſs rather than light, and where luſt, prejudice, and intereſt generally prevail againſt truth and reaſon? Is the contemptible weapon of the croſs likely to do execution? Are the unpopular mortifying doctrines of one that was crucified like a malefactor and a ſlave, likely to prevail againſt all the prejudices of education, the attachment of mankind to the religion of antiquity, eſtabliſhed by law; the policy of prieſtcraft; the love of gain; the powers of the world; and the various oppoſitions of the depraved hearts of mankind? Are ſuch gentle and weak weapons as theſe likely to have any ſucceſs? Yes, theſe weapons, though not carnal, were mighty, reſiſtleſs, all-conquering—but then you muſt obſerve, they were mighty through God. The excellency of the power was of God, and ſuch unpromiſing arms were uſed on purpoſe to ſhew this. It was he that gave

edge to the weapons, and force to the blow. Without the energy of his grace, they could have done nothing, even in the hands of apoſtles. But, by the might of his ſpirit, they became almighty, and carried all before them: theſe contemptible weapons, with his concurrence, pulled down ſtrong-holds; caſt down towering imaginations, and reſonings * that ſeemed impregnable, and demoliſhed every high thing, every battery, caſtle, or citadel, that was erected againſt the knowledge of God, that knowledge of him which the goſpel brought to light, and reduced every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Chriſt. Sinners were brought not only to compliment Jeſus with a bended knee, and profeſs ſubjection to him with their lips, but to bow their ſtubborn hearts to him, and let him reign in their affections. That goſpel to which they were ſo averſe, gained a complete victory over their minds, their minds, which the Alexanders and Cæſars of the world could not ſubdue; and reduced not only their external conduct, but their thoughts; not only ſome thoughts, but every thought, to the obedience of Chriſt. When God gives the commiſſion, the ſtately walls of Jericho will fall, even at the feeble ſound of rams horns.

To bring into captivity, is generally underſtood in a bad ſenſe, and ſignifies the carrying away of loyal ſubjects againſt their wills, into a foreign country, and there enſlaving them to the enemy. But here it is a ſignificant catachreſis, and ſignifies the deliverance of ſinners from the ſlavery of ſin and Satan, and their reſtoration into a ſtate of liberty, and into favour with God, and this too by their own free conſent. And it is called a captivating, to intimate, that, though when the ſinner ſubmits he does it voluntarily, yet he had really made a ſtrong reſiſtance, and did not ſubmit till ſweetly conſtrained to it; and that he looked upon his ſtate of ſlavery to ſin as a ſtate of freedom, and was as unwilling to leave it as a free-born

* *logiſmous.*

born subject would be to be captivated and enslaved in an enemy's country.

I foresee I cannot take time to do justice to this copious subject. But I shall endeavour to comprise my thoughts in as little room as possible, in a few propositions, to which each head in my text may be reduced. And the whole will be but a short history of the revolt of mankind against the great God, their rightful Sovereign, and their miserable slavery to sin and Satan—of an important expedition set on foot and carried on by the ministry of the gospel, to recover them from their state of slavery, and reduce them to their obedience—of their various methods of opposition to this design; or the various ways in which they fortify themselves against the attacks made upon them by divine grace for this end—of the issue of this siege, particularly the terms of surrender—and of their consequent deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan, and their willing subjection to their rightful Lord and Proprietor.

I. All mankind, in their present state of apostacy, have revolted from God, and surrendered themselves slaves to sin and Satan.

We might produce abundant evidence of this from the sacred writings; but as the evidence from plain undeniable fact may be more convictive, I shall insist chiefly upon it. Mankind are secretly disaffected to God and his government in their hearts; and hence they do not take pleasure in his service. They are not solicitous for the honour and dignity of his government. They will not bear the restraints of his authority, nor regard his law as the rule of their conduct, but will follow their own inclinations, let him prescribe what he will. Nay they have no disposition to return to their duty, or listen to proposals for reconciliation; and hence they disregard the gospel (which is a scheme to bring about a peace) as well as the law. In short, they will not do any thing that God commands them, unless it suit their own corrupt inclinations;

inclinations; and they will not abſtain from any thing which he forbids, for his ſake, if they have any temptation to it from their own luſts. Theſe things, and a thouſand more which might be mentioned, fix the charge of rebellion upon them. It is undeniable they are diſaffected to his government in their hearts, whatever forced or complimental expreſſions of loyalty ſome of them may at times give him. Look into your own hearts, and take a view of the world around you, and you will find this is evidently the caſe.

But though they are thus diſobedient to their rightful ſovereign, yet to ſin and Satan, thoſe uſurping and tyrannical maſters, they are the moſt tame and obſequious ſlaves. For theſe, they will go through the moſt ſordid drudgery, for no other wages than death. For theſe, they will give up their moſt important intereſts, and exchange their ſouls, and their ſhare in heaven, without any retaliation, but the ſorry tranſitory pleaſures of ſin. Let temptation but beckon, they immediately take the ſignal, and obey. Let ſin command them to hurt their ſouls and bodies, and perhaps their eſtates, with exceſſive drinking, the poor ſlaves comply. Let ſin order them to ſwear, to lie, to defraud, they ſubmit, though eternal damnation be the conſequence. Let ſin order them to purſue riches, honour, or ſenſual pleaſures, through right and wrong, at the loſs of their eaſe, the danger of their lives, and the deſtruction of their ſouls, they engage in the drudgery, and toil all their days in it. Let ſin forbid them to ſerve God, to attend ſeriouſly to his word, to pray to him importunately, in ſecret and in their families, to reflect upon their miſerable condition, to repent and believe the goſpel; let ſin but lay them under a prohibition to theſe things, they will cautiouſly refrain from them; and all the arguments which God and man can uſe with them will have little or no weight. In ſhort, let ſin but order them to give up their intereſt in heaven, and run the riſk of eternal ruin; let ſin but command them

them to neglect and disregard the God that made them, and the Saviour that died for them, they will venture upon the self-denying and destructive enterprize. They will do more for sin than they will do for the great God their rightful Sovereign and constant Benefactor. Sin has more influence with them than all the persuasions of parents, ministers, and their best friends; nay, more influence than the love, the dying groans and agonies of a crucified Saviour. There is nothing so sacred, so dear or valuable in heaven, but they will give it up if sin requires them. Nothing so terrible in hell, but they will rush into, if sin sets them upon the desperate attempt. They are the most tame, unresisting captives to sin. Sin is an arbitrary, absolute, despotic tyrant over them; and, which is most astonishing, they are not weary of its tyranny, nor do they pant and struggle for liberty. Liberty to them has lost its charms, and they hug their chains and love their bondage. Alas! are there not many free-born Britons in this assembly, who are slaves in this sense? slaves in a worse sense than the poorest negro among us: slaves to sin, and consequently to Satan; for sin is commander in chief under the prince of darkness, the gloomy god of this world: it is by sin, as his deputy, that he exercises his power, and therefore sinners are in reality slaves to him! This, one would think, would be a shocking reflection to them, that they are slaves of the most malignant being in nature; a being not only malignant, but also very powerful; that they have broken off from the indulgent and equitable government of the Sovereign of the universe, and sold themselves slaves to such a lawless tyrannical usurper! But, alas! they do not resent the usurpation, nor struggle to throw off the yoke, and regain their liberty. They resign themselves voluntarily slaves, and love their master and his drudgery.

This is a very melancholy, but, alas! it is a true history of human nature in its present state. Thus are mankind

mankind diſaffected to the divine government, and held in a wretched captivity to ſin and Satan. This is indeed a very diſmal and threatening ſtate, and we might tremble for the conſequences, had we no goſpel to inform us of a plan of reconciliation. Here I may borrow the words of one of the greateſt and beſt of chriſtians.* "When we hear of a ſort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion againſt him; that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in ſuſpenſe, and ſay, Well, and what became of the buſineſs? How did it iſſue? What was the event? and would expect to hear, Why fire came down from heaven upon them, and conſumed them in a moment; or the earth opened and ſwallowed them up quick: yea, and if the matter were ſo reported to us, if we did hear that fire and brimſtone, flames and thunder-bolts came down inſtantly upon them, and deſtroyed them in a moment, who would not ſay, So I thought: who could expect better?" But what grateful aſtoniſhment may it raiſe in heaven and earth, to hear that their offended Sovereign has been ſo far from this, that he has ſent his Son, his only Son, to die for them, in order to bring about a peace! and that,

II. He has ſet on foot an important expedition, and is carrying it on from age to age by the miniſtry of the goſpel, to recover theſe rebels from their voluntary ſlavery to ſin and Satan, and reduce them to their duty, and ſo bring them into a ſtate of liberty and happineſs!

This is the benevolent deſign on which the Son of God came down from his native heaven, and for which he endured the ſhame and the agonies of the croſs. This is the deſign on which he ſent out his apoſtles into the world, armed, not with the inſtruments of miſchief and deſtruction, but with the moſt beneficent

* Mr. Howe, in his diſcourſe on Reconciliation between God and Man.

beneficent powers, powers of doing good, the powers of preaching the moſt important doctrines, of proving them by argument, and the evidence of miracles and prophecies, and of exerciſing proper diſcipline upon offenders, to bring them to repentance. To carry on this deſign, the miniſtry of the goſpel is perpetuated in the world from age to age; and for this purpoſe, my dear people, I would exerciſe my miniſtry among you, I would make an attack upon your hearts to break them open for the admiſſion of the King of heaven. I have continued the ſiege for near ten years, the ſpace ſpent in reducing the ſtubborn Trojans; and now, in the name of God, I once more would renew the attack, and ſummon you to capitulate and ſurrender.

For this purpoſe the miniſters of the goſpel have their arms; they begin the attack with the artillery of the divine law, which thunders the terrors of the Lord againſt you. They ſurround you with troops of arguments, which one would think would ſoon overpower a reaſonable creature, and conſtrain him immediately to ſubmit. They reaſon the matter with you, and lay before you the wickedneſs, the baſeneſs, the unnatural ingratitude, and the dangerous conſequences of your rebellion. They inform you what a good king and what an excellent government you have rejected; what holy, juſt, and good laws you have inſolently broken; what rich mercies you have ungratefully abuſed; what long-continued patience you have provoked; and what friendly warnings you have deſpiſed. They expoſe to your view the terrible conſequences of your rebellion, if you perſiſt in it: they honeſtly warn you that *the wages of ſin is death;* death in all its terrible forms; death temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal; that if you continue the unequal war againſt Heaven, it will iſſue in your eternal remedileſs deſtruction. They open to you the corruption of your natures; the averſion of your hearts to all that is ſpiritually good and excellent;

lent; your innate propenſions to ſin, and voluntary indulgence of your luſts and guilty pleaſures. They put you upon a review of your lives, to recollect your wilful omiſſions of duty to God and man, and your commiſſions of known ſin, in ſpite of the reſtraints of authority, the allurements of mercy, and the admonitions of your own conſciences. When they have thus diſcharged the dreadful artillery of the law, the thunders and lightnings of Sinai againſt you, the way is prepared for propoſing the terms of ſurrender and the articles of reconciliation. They make an attack upon the citadel of your heart, with the gentler arms from the magazine of the goſpel of peace. They repreſent your injured Sovereign as reconcileable, reconcileable through Jeſus Chriſt. They give you the ſtrongeſt aſſurances from his own word, that he is willing to make up the difference and conclude a laſting peace with you; that upon your laying down your arms (that is, forſaking your ſins and ſubmitting upon his terms) he will freely pardon all your paſt rebellion, and receive you again into his favour. They alſo inform you of the ſtrange method in which this peace may be brought about, conſiſtently with the honour of his character as the Ruler of the world, and with the ſacred rights of his government, and that is, through the mediation of his Son, the great Peace-maker, who, in your ſtead, has obeyed that law which you have broken, and endured that penalty which you have incurred. They likewiſe inform you in what manner you are to accede to this treaty, or conſent to this plan of accommodation, namely, by believing in his Son, by accepting peace with God, and every bleſſing as his free gift through Jeſus Chriſt, by a deep ingenuous repentance for your paſt rebellion, and by devoting yourſelves to his ſervice for the future. Theſe overtures of reconciliation they enforce from various topics, which, one would think, you would not be able to reſiſt. They repreſent to you the riches of divine grace and mercy, and the all-conquering

all-conquering love of Jesus. The contemptible weapon the cross, is a weapon of tried and well-known energy; many an hard heart has it broken; many an obstinate rebel has it subdued. They *pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God;* and if you should be hardy enough to refuse such a request, they urge it with arguments drawn from its reasonableness in justice and gratitude, from its being of the last importance to your happiness, as being the only way in which apostate creatures can re-obtain the favour of their injured Sovereign—and from the terrible consequences of a refusal; for unless you submit upon these terms, you may expect nothing but wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour you as adversaries.

You cannot but know, my brethren, that the ministry of the gospel has, with such arms as these, laid close siege to your hearts, year after year. And who would have thought that one heart among you would have been proof against this divine artillery, and stood it out so long? Some of you, I doubt not, have surrendered, and are now the willing subjects of your heavenly King. But, alas! do not some of you still obstinately refuse to submit, and persist in your rebellion? And are you not fortifying yourselves more and more against the attempts made to reduce you to obedience? This naturally leads me,

III. To give you a kind of history of the various ways in which sinners oppose this benevolent design of the ministry of the gospel to subdue them to the obedience of Christ.

Alas! they also have their artillery, with which they labour to repel all the attacks made upon them by the gospel. They, as it were, throw up various lines of intrenchments around them, to defend them against conviction. Particularly,

Sinners hide themselves in the darkness of ignorance; ignorance of God, of Jesus Christ, of the law and gospel, and consequently of themselves. They

endeavour to keep up their courage by refuſing to know their danger. They muffle themſelves up in ignorance, ſo that they do not ſee their almighty enemy, nor the inſtruments of death he has prepared for them; and hence they are ſo ſtupid as to conclude that neither does he ſee them, nor can find them out. They alſo fortify themſelves, as it were, in the encloſure of a hard heart; a heart of rock and adamant, which is proof againſt the artillery of the goſpel. This, like an impregnable cave cut in a rock, ſtands out againſt all the terrors of the Lord ſet in array againſt it. The ſinner, ſhut up in this ſtrong-hold, can laugh at the ſhaking of Jehovah's ſpear! Let the law thunder out tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguiſh againſt him; let the goſpel attack him with the croſs of Chriſt, with all the love of a dying Saviour, and all the mercy of a reconcileable God, he is ſtill ſecure, and bids defiance to all theſe attacks. The rock is impregnable till the power of God gives force to theſe weapons, and then indeed it begins to tremble; then the ſinner is ſtruck into a conſternation, and is dreadfully apprehenſive he cannot hold out the ſiege. This natural fortification (ſo I may call it, for his ignorance and hardneſs of heart are natural to him, though dreadfully improved by art) this natural fortification I ſay, begins to fail him; and hereupon he ſets himſelf to work upon artificial fortifications, which may enable him to hold it out the longer in his oppoſition.

He throws up an intrenchment of objections and excuſes, or (a little to alter the metaphor) he diſcharges whole vollies of objections and excuſes againſt thoſe that beſiege him. Perhaps he dares to plead that he is already a dutiful ſubject of the King of heaven, and therefore that the miniſtry of the goſpel has miſſed its aim in directing its artillery againſt him as an enemy. And if to this plea it be anſwered, that his temper and conduct towards his Sovereign plainly ſhew that he is really diſaffected to him

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in his heart, whatever outward profeſſions of duty he may make; he replies, that, if in ſome inſtances he allows himſelf in the breach of the divine laws, yet he has no bad deſign in ſo doing; that he has a good heart notwithſtanding; and that he hopes the King of heaven will not be ſo ſtrict as to take notice of theſe things. He objects, that he is as loyal as other people about him, and why may not that ſuffice? and that, if he ſhould be very punctual and zealous in his duty, he would ſoon be out of faſhion, and draw the contempt and ridicule of the world upon him. He objects, that he has not been ſo bold and daring a rebel as many others, and therefore he cannot think that ſo mild and gracious a King will ſeverely puniſh him. He objects, that he is now too buſy about other things, to liſten to propoſals of reconciliation; and therefore begs that the matter may be put off, at leaſt, till he has finiſhed ſome important affairs he has now in hand. And he promiſes, that the next year, or in old age, or upon a death-bed, he will ſubmit, and conclude a peace. He pleads, that he enjoys a great deal of pleaſure under his preſent maſter, Sin, which he muſt give up as unlawful, if he ſhould change maſters; and that the ſervice of God is a drudgery to him, and that he has no reliſh for it, and that the laws of the King of heaven are ſo ſtrict, that he cannot live under them.—Theſe, and a thouſand other pleas, the rebel urges to excuſe his non-compliance with the propoſals of reconciliation; and in theſe he truſts as a ſufficient defence.

Moreover, the luſts of the fleſh, his pride, preſumption, and love of eaſe, the cares of the world, the company of the wicked, who perſuade him by all means not to ſurrender, and furniſh him with arms and all the aſſiſtance in their power to continue the war, theſe are all ſo many ſtrong-holds in which the ſinner fortifies himſelf againſt the Lord Jeſus.

But if the weapons of the goſpel prove mighty through God to demoliſh theſe ſtrong-holds, and the rebel

rebel finds they can defend him no longer, then he abandons theſe out-works, and intrenches himſelf ſecretly in his own righteouſneſs. He, as it were, ſurrounds himſelf with a line of good works, repentance, and reformation. And now he thinks he is ſafe. Now he hopes he ſhall paſs for a friend and ſubject of the King of Heaven, as he is holding a place for him, and that the artillery of the law will continue to play upon him no longer. This is the ſinner's laſt refuge; and it is the greateſt difficulty of all to drive him out of this. He will not abandon this, till he is driven to great extremity indeed. And here many continue till they are dragged out of it to the tribunal of their ſupreme Judge.

It muſt alſo be obſerved, that the ſinner tries all the arts of diſſimulation to ſecure his ſtrong-hold. When he finds he cannot defend himſelf as an open enemy by his declared hoſtilities, he feigns a ſubmiſſion; he pretends to capitulate and ſurrender: but then, he does not cordially conſent to all the terms. He makes a reſerve of ſome favourite luſts, and will not deliver them all up to the ſword of the Conqueror: he has ſecret exceptions to the conditions of ſurrender, and will not comply with them all. There are ſome inſtances of duty, from which he will excuſe himſelf. In ſhort, his heart is not well-affected to the Conqueror. His ſubmiſſion is forced and involuntary, and therefore is reſented as the baſeſt treachery by him that ſearches the heart, and muſt reign in the hearts of all his ſubjects.

Are not ſome of you, my brethren, now intrenched and fortified againſt the goſpel in theſe ſtrongholds? And ſuch of you as are now the willing ſubjects of Jeſus Chriſt, may you not recollect, that thus did you once ſtrengthen yourſelves in your oppoſition to him! But he has ſweetly overcome your enmity, and conſtrained you to ſubmit. And this leads me,

IV. To deſcribe the iſſue of this war, where it is effectually carried on, and particularly the terms of ſurrender. The

The ſucceſs of this war depends entirely upon the concurrence of the almighty power of God. If the weapons of our warfare prove mighty, it is through God. Let the miniſters of the goſpel attack the ſinner with all the arms with which the magazines of the law and goſpel of ſcripture and reaſon furniſh them, they will never ſubdue one ſoul to the obedience of Chriſt: the ſinner will ſtill ſtand it out, and bid them defiance. What is the reaſon, that there are ſo many ſecure preſumptuous rebels among us, though the goſpel-miniſtry has ſo often and ſo long played off its artillery againſt them? The reaſon is, the weapons of our warfare are not made mighty through God. God does not give edge and force to theſe arms by the all-conquering power of his ſpirit. But when he begins to work, then the hardeſt ſinner begins to tremble, the rocky heart breaks to pieces, and his ſtrong-holds are demoliſhed. All his objections are ſilenced: he is convinced that he is indeed a rebel againſt his rightful Sovereign; that his rebellion is moſt unnatural, ungrateful, unreaſonable, and the height of wickedneſs; and that it is a moſt aſtoniſhing inſtance of condeſcending grace, that his provoked Sovereign ſhould ſtoop to treat with him and deign to propoſe him articles of reconciliation. He ſees that he might juſtly cut him off, without one offer of mercy. He is ſtruck with horror to think that ever he, a poor dependent worm, ſhould engage in a war againſt the Lord of armies, who has univerſal nature at his command, and eſpecially that he has dared to ſtand out ſo long againſt him. He is ſenſible of the danger of delays, ſenſible that he has been ungrateful and rebellious too long already, and that, if he delay his ſubmiſſion, his almighty enemy may take his ſtrong-holds by ſtorm, and put him to the ſword. He is now ſenſible that the ſlavery of ſin is intolerable; that his luſts are tyrannical maſters, and will give him no other wages but death; and therefore he pants and ſtruggles for liberty. The artillery

artillery of the divine law demolishes the intrenchment which he had formed of his own good works, and leaves him naked and defenceless to its vindictive fire. Conscience also calls to the sinner to surrender, to surrender in time, while terms of peace may be obtained, and warns him of the dreadful consequences of continuing the war. The trumpet of the gospel is still publishing peace, and summoning him to submit. The gospel assures him of pardon and acceptance, if he will but surrender. Now also (if I may so boldly accommodate the military style to this subject) now his provisions and ammunition begin to fail; he finds he can subsist no longer; and, like the prodigal, is *just perishing with hunger*. He finds he can defend himself no longer, but must submit or die. If he continues in arms, he is sure to die; but if he submits, he has some hopes of pardon; for O! he has *heard that the King of Israel is a merciful King*. He must however make the trial. All this time the spirit of God is at work within, sweetly inclining the stubborn heart to yield, *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*. He gives the rebel favourable thoughts of the government of the Conqueror, and the infinite advantages of living under it. In short, he enforces upon the heart all the applications made from without by the ministry of the gospel.

And now the sinner begins to think in earnest of surrendering: now he eagerly listens to the terms of peace; and at length he lays down his arms, submits, to the Conqueror, falls at his feet, casts himself upon his mercy, and welcomes him into the citadel of his heart. This is the most happy and important hour the sinner ever saw: the transactions of this hour extend their blessed consequences through all his future life, and to the remotest periods of eternity. It may be necessary for me to inform you more particularly of the manner of this surrender.

(1.) The

(1.) The ſinner ſurrenders himſelf as an obnoxious rebel, lying entirely at the mercy of the Conqueror. He has no plea to excuſe his rebellion, no merit to ingratiate himſelf, or procure a pardon. He pleads guilty, and ſurrenders himſelf to the will of the Conqueror, conſcious that he may do with him as he pleaſes. His high imaginations of himſelf are all demoliſhed, his confidence in his own righteouſneſs is entirely mortified, and he has nothing to plead but mercy, free unmerited mercy. On this he caſts himſelf as his only ground of hope.

(2.) He ſurrenders himſelf entirely upon the terms preſcribed by the Conqueror. He is conſcious that he has no right to dictate, or to ſtand upon terms. His province is to ſubmit. The way of reconciliation revealed in the goſpel, appears to him infinitely reaſonable, and to ſtand in need of no amendment.—Particularly, he is willing to lay down his arms; that is, to forſake his ſins, and to walk for the future in the ways of holineſs; or to make the pleaſure of his Sovereign the rule of his conduct. Above all, it muſt be noticed, that he is willing to be reconciled to God through Jeſus Chriſt. The mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, the glorious peculiarity of the chriſtian religion, is the only medium through which he would approach to God, and expect reconciliation with him. It is only in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt he truſts to make atonement for his guilt, and procure the divine favour. In ſhort, he is willing the Conqueror ſhould make his own terms, and he ſubmits, if he may but have his life for a prey. He puts a blank into his hands, deſirous he ſhould fill it up with what articles he pleaſes, and he will cheerfully ſubſcribe to them. His language is like that of Paul, when ſtruck down proſtrate at the feet of the perſecuted Jeſus, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Lord do thou command, and I will obey. Now the rebel is all ſubmiſſion, all obedience.

(3.) He

(3.) He ſubmits voluntarily and cheerfully. The power of divine grace has rooted out the enmity of his carnal mind, and implanted the principle of love in his heart. He breaks off from ſin and Satan, as from the moſt cruel uſurpers and deſtroyers; and he ſubmits to Chriſt, not merely as to an irreſiſtible Conqueror, but as to a Deliverer. He enters upon a religious life, not as a ſtate of ſlavery and unwilling captivity, but as a ſtate of the moſt glorious liberty. He ſubmits to the terms of reconciliation, not as the arbitrary impoſitions of an imperious uſurper, but as the gentle and reaſonable preſcriptions of a wiſe and good Ruler. He eſteems all his laws holy, and juſt, and good; and with all his heart he acquieſces and rejoices in the bleſſed goſpel of peace. In ſhort, the rebel's heart is now entirely changed and rendered well-affected to the divine government; and conſequently, he cordially and freely ſubmits to it. Once indeed he hated it, and then he did at beſt but feign ſubmiſſion to it; but now, his enmity being ſubdued, he ſurrenders himſelf with all his heart. It is one of the freeſt acts of his whole life.

(4.) He makes an univerſal ſurrender of himſelf and all that he is and has to Jeſus Chriſt. He makes no reſerve of one favourite luſt; but gives them all up to be ſlain. He makes no ſecret exceptions to any of the articles of reconciliation, but heartily conſents to them all. He devotes his whole ſoul and all its faculties to God, in and through Jeſus Chriſt; his underſtanding to know him; his heart to love him; and his will to be governed by him. This is implied in my text;—*Bringing every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Chriſt.* Every thought, every paſſion, every motion of the ſoul muſt ſubmit to Chriſt, and evey inſurrection of ſin in his heart alarms him, as an inteſtine enemy. He alſo yields his body to God, and his members *as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto holineſs.* He alſo devotes all his accompliſhments, his genius, learning, influence, and popularity,

popularity, his riches, and in ſhort, all his poſſeſſions of every kind; willing to employ them all in the ſervice of his new Maſter, or to reſign them all, if their preſervation ſhould be inconſiſtent with his duty to him. O! how different a temper is this from that which is natural to the ſinner!

Thus the treaty of peace is happily concluded; and he that was once a rebel againſt Heaven, and an enemy to the croſs of Chriſt, is now become a friend and a loyal ſubject. The paſt difference is entirely forgotten and buried, and he is received into favour, as though he had never offended. Once God was angry with him every day, but now he accepts him in the beloved. Now the prince of hell has loſt a captive; and Jeſus has the ſatisfaction of ſeeing one more of his ſpiritual ſeed born unto his family. Now there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, upon this addition to the number of loyal ſubjects. O! the happy, the glorious peace! O! the bleſſed change in the circumſtance of the poor condemned criminal!

What now remains?

V. We take a view of the true convert's ſtate and conduct, in conſequence of this reconciliation.

This you may be ſure is very different from what it was before. He is now delivered from his ſordid ſlavery to ſin, as well as from guilt, and the ſentence of condemnation. He is juſtified and accepted before God, through Jeſus Chriſt, and entitled to an heavenly crown and kingdom. Sin, indeed, is not entirely ſubdued; it forms frequent and violent inſurrections, and ſtruggles hard to recover its former power over him. The old man with his affections and luſts was immediately crucified, upon the ſinner's ſurrender to Chriſt; but crucifixion is a lingering death, and hence ſin is never entirely dead while he continues in this imperfect ſtate: it is every day plotting againſt him, and labouring to enſnare him. And hence his life is a conſtant warfare, an inceſſant

conflict. He lives the life of a centinal, perpetually upon the watch; or of a ſoldier, night and day under arms. If he is off his guard but for an hour, he is liable to be ſurpriſed, and ſometimes, alas! he is overcome. But he riſes again, and renews the combat, and will rather die than ſubmit: he would reſiſt even unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin. In ſhort, whatever inadvertencies he may fall into, he is habitually on God's ſide: he eſpouſes the cauſe of God in this rebellious world, whatever it coſts him. He is an enemy to the kingdom of darkneſs, and all its intereſts; and it is the great buſineſs of his life to oppoſe it in himſelf and others. The longer he lives under the government of King Jeſus, the more he is attached to him, and in love with his adminiſtration; and it is his habitual endeavour to lead a life of univerſal obedience.

And now, my brethren, there is an inquiry I would ſet you upon, and that is, whether you have ever been captivated into a willing obedience to Jeſus Chriſt? I am afraid this matter is not ſo plainly and unqueſtionably in your favour, as to render all inquiry into it needleſs. I am afraid it is diſmally dark and doubtful, with regard to ſome of you, whether you are the ſervants of Chriſt or the ſlaves of ſin and Satan. Nay, I am afraid, there are plain evidences againſt ſome of you. However, put the matter to trial, that you may ſee how it will turn out; for I aſſure you it is a matter of too much importance to be ſlightly paſſed over.

Now it is evident, in the firſt place, that you are ſtill the enemies of Jeſus Chriſt, unleſs you have been deeply convinced of your enmity. It is impoſſible you ſhould be reconciled to him, till you have ſeen your need of reconciliation; and it is impoſſible you ſhould ſee your need of reconciliation till you are convinced that you are at variance with him. Such of you therefore are undoubtedly his enemies, who imagine you have always been his friends.

In

In the next place, turn the ſubſtance of what has been ſaid into ſo many queries to yourſelves, and by theſe means, you may diſcover the truth of your caſe. Has ever the dreadful artillery of the law diſcharged its terrors upon you? Have you ever been driven out of all your carnal confidences, and particularly your own righteouſneſs? Have you ever ſurrendered yourſelves to the Conqueror? Has he overcome you by the ſweet conſtraints of his love? And upon what terms did you ſurrender? Did you ſurrender as a rebel, lying at mercy? Did you ſubmit to his terms without pretending to dictate any of your own? Did you ſubmit voluntarily and cheerfully? Did you ſurrender yourſelves univerſally, without any reſerve? Do you ſince endeavour to behave as dutiful ſubjects? And do you find his ſervice to be perfect freedom?

And now, in conſequence of this trial, *Who is upon the Lord's ſide? Who?* What is your real character? Are you to be ranked among the ſubjects of Chriſt, or among the enemies of his crown and dignity?

Could I now collect the rebels together into one company, I would tell them ſome very alarming things from that God to whom they refuſe to ſubmit. Yes, ſinner, as Ehud ſaid to Eglon, king of Moab, *I have a meſſage from God to you.* Judges iii. 20.

In his name, and as his ambaſſador, I warn you of the dreadful conſequences of your unnatural rebellion againſt him. You cannot make good your cauſe againſt him. *He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength; who hath hardened himſelf againſt him and proſpered?* All nature is ſubject to him, and he can order the meaneſt part of it to be the executioner of his vengeance upon you. If you refuſe to ſubmit, you ſhall as ſurely periſh as you have a being. Of this you have reaſon to be apprehenſive at all times, but eſpecially at this time, when your almighty enemy is attacking your country with the terrors of war, and your neighbourhood with an epidemical raging diſtemper. Sickneſſes are his ſoldiers, and fight in his cauſe

cauſe againſt a rebellious world. *He ſays to one, Go, and it goeth; and to another, Come, and it cometh.* And are you not afraid ſome of theſe deadly ſhafts may ſtrike you now, when they are flying ſo thick around you? God has for many a year uſed gentler weapons with you, but now he ſeems about to take the citadel by ſtorm. Now, therefore, now without delay, lay down your arms, and ſurrender yourſelves to him.

I have alſo joyful news to communicate, even to you rebels, if you are diſpoſed to hear it; and that is, that your injured Sovereign is willing to be reconciled to you after all your hoſtilities, if you will now ſubmit to the terms of reconciliation.

Therefore, *I pray you, in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.* Chriſt is not here in perſon; but lo I am here to manage the treaty in his name, though I alſo am formed out of the clay.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS ILLUSTRATED IN THE METHOD OF SALVATION, THROUGH THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

[*A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.*]

JOHN xii. 27, 28. *Now my ſoul is troubled; and what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour: but for this cauſe came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*

SHOULD a favourite child now come running to you, with all the marks of agony in his countenance, and with theſe words in his mouth, "I am troubled; my very ſoul is troubled, and I know not what to ſay;" it would raiſe all the tender ſenſations of fatherly compaſſion and anxiety in your breaſts, and you

you would ſolicitouſly inquire, "what ails my dear child, what is the cauſe of your diſtreſs?" But here your ears are ſtruck with a more ſtrange and affecting ſound; you hear the ſource of all conſolation complaining of ſorrow: "I am troubled; my very ſoul is troubled, and in a commotion like the ſtormy ocean." You ſee the wiſdom of God, the guide of the blind, pauſing—heſitating—at a ſtand—at a loſs what to ſay. And will you not ſo far intereſt yourſelves in his ſorrows, as ſolicitouſly to inquire, "What ails my dear Lord?" Judas has not yet betrayed him; the rabble have not yet apprehended him, and dragged him away, like a flagitious malefactor: as yet his face is not diſhonoured with ſpitting, nor bruiſed with blows; as yet I ſee no crown of thorns upon his ſacred head; no nails in his hands and feet; no ſpear in his ſide; no ſtreams of blood and water running down his body. He is at liberty, and ſurrounded with his uſual friends: nay, at this time even the deſpiſed Jeſus begins to grow popular: the humble Jeſus, the man of ſorrows, has juſt now entered Jeruſalem in triumph, like a conqueror, ſurrounded with the applauſes and hoſannas of the multitude. Now alſo the firſt-fruits of the Gentiles are brought to him: a number of Greek proſelytes beg an interview with him, and deſire his inſtructions: a thing ſo agreeable to him, that as ſoon as he hears of it, he cries out, *The hour is come that the Son of man ſhould be glorified.* John xii. 23. And why does my Lord alter his voice ſo ſoon? Why, my bleſſed Jeſus, why this ſudden fall from joy to trouble, from triumph to ſorrow and perplexity? The reaſon was, that though his ſufferings were not now upon him, yet he ſaw them approaching: he ſaw the fatal hour juſt at hand; and this immediate proſpect raiſes all the paſſions of his human nature, and throws him into a ſea of troubles. He did not fall into his ſufferings through inadvertency, or the want of foreſight; and his fortitude and reſolution were not owing to any hopes of eſcape,

eſcape, or an expectation of better uſage. But we are expreſsly told, that *Jeſus knew all things that ſhould come upon him.* John xvii. 4. He ſaw the rugged road before him, all the way from his cradle to his croſs. He ruſhed into dangers with his eyes open, and went on courageouſly to encounter the laſt enemy, Death, fully expecting to meet him in all his terrors. Now the foreſight of ſufferings is a peculiar aggravation; it brings them upon the anxious expectant by anticipation: they are reflected back upon him, before they are actually inflicted; and thus the pain of a few moments may be diffuſed through a length of years. And ſometimes the expectation of an evil is more tormenting than the evil itſelf.* Our happineſs is in a great meaſure owing to our being happily blind to the future, † and ignorant of the calamities before us. But Jeſus had not this mitigation of his ſufferings: the croſs, the ſcourge, the nails, the crown of thorns, were ever before his mind: ſo that he could ſay with yet greater reaſon than his ſervant Paul, *I die daily, I am in deaths oft.* By this painful foreſight, the crown of thorns was always upon his head; the nails were all his days faſtened in his hands and feet; and his whole life was, as it were, one continued crucifixion. How peculiarly aggravated, how long continued, how uninterrupted do the ſeverities of his ſufferings appear, when viewed in this light! and how does this diſplay his fortitude and the ſtrength of his love! though he had this tragical proſpect before him, yet he did not draw back or give up the arduous undertaking; but he reſolutely held on his way; he was irreſiſtibly carried to meet all theſe terrors, by his ardent zeal for his Father's glory, and his unconquerable love to the guilty creatures whoſe ſalvation he had undertaken. Sometimes indeed he ſhews he was a man; that he was capable of all the tender and painful ſenſations of human nature: and if

* Morſque minus poenae quam mora mortis habet. OVID.

† "O blindneſs to the future! kindly given." POPE.

if he had not been such, his sufferings would have been no sufferings. At such times his innocent humanity seems struck aghast, pauses and hesitates, and would fain shrink away from the burden, would fain put by the bitter cup. But immediately the stronger principles of zeal for the divine glory, and love to man, gain the ascendent, calm all these tumults of feeble nature, and irresistibly impel him on to the dreadful encounter in its most shocking appearances. O! the generous bravery of the Captain of our salvation! O! the all-conquering power of his love! The critics are in raptures on the bravery of Homer's Achilles, who engaged in the expedition against Troy, though he knew he should never return. But how much more worthy to be celebrated is the heroic love of Jesus, who voluntarily exposed himself to infinitely greater sufferings, when he foresaw them all, and knew what would be the consequence!

The language of raised passions is abrupt and hurrying:—and in such language does our Lord here speak. *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?* "What petition shall I ask of my Father? such an hour of distress is a proper time to address him. But what shall I say to him? shall I yield to the reluctance of my frail human nature, that would draw back from suffering? shall I urge the petition my feeble flesh would put into my mouth, and say, *Father save me from this hour?* * "Father, dismiss me from this undertaking, and resign the glory which thou wouldst gain by the execution of it. Father, if it be possible, save sinners in some easier way; or let them perish, rather than that I should suffer so much for them. Shall this be my petition? No; I cannot bear the thought, that my Father should lose so much glory, and the objects of my love should perish. It was to suffer for these important purposes that I came unto

* The sense is more easy if we read *Pater, soson me ek tes oras tautes*, as a question. The original will bear it; and so Grotius, Doddridge, &c. understand it.

unto this hour. For this I undertook to be the ſinner's Friend and Mediator; for this I left my native paradiſe, and aſſumed this feeble fleſh and blood; for this I have ſpent three-and-thirty painful years in this wretched world, that I might meet this diſmal hour. And now, when it is come, ſhall I fly from it, or ſhall I drop an undertaking which I have ſo much at heart, and in which I am ſo far engaged? No, this petition I will not urge, though it be the natural cry of my tender humanity. What then ſhall I ſay? *Father, glorify thy name.* This is the petition on which I will inſiſt, come on me what will. Let the rabble inſult me, as the offscouring of all things; let falſe witneſſes accuſe me, and perfidious judges condemn me, as a notorious criminal; let the blood-thirſty murderers rack me on the croſs, and ſhed every drop of blood in my veins, ſtill I will inſiſt upon this petition; and not all the tortures that earth and hell can inflict, ſhall force me to retract it: *Father, glorify thy name:* diſplay the glory of thy attributes by my ſufferings, and I will patiently ſubmit to them all. Diſplay the perfections of thy nature, exhibit an honourable repreſentation of thyſelf to all worlds by the ſalvation of ſinners through my death, and I will yield myſelf to its power in its moſt ſhocking forms. Let this end be but anſwered, and I am content. This conſideration calms the tumult of paſſions in my breaſt, overpowers the reluctance of my human nature, and makes it all patience and ſubmiſſion."

I intend, my brethren, to confine myſelf at preſent to this part of my text, this petition on which Jeſus inſiſts, and in which his mind acquieſces after perplexity and heſitation: *Father, glorify thy name.* And it evidently ſuggeſts to us this important truth, that the divine perfections are moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed and glorified in the method of ſalvation through the ſufferings of Chriſt.

This truth I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate, after I have premiſed that it is moſt fit and proper that the glory

glory of God ſhould be the laſt end of all things, and particularly, that it ſhould be his own principal end in all his works. He is in himſelf the moſt glorious of all beings, the ſupreme excellence, and the ſupreme good; and it is infinitely fit and reaſonable that he ſhould be known and acknowledged as ſuch, and that it ſhould be his great end in all his works to repreſent himſelf in this light. It is but juſtice to himſelf, and it is the kindeſt thing he can do for his creatures, ſince their chief happineſs muſt conſiſt in the enjoyment of the ſupreme good, and as they cannot enjoy him without knowing him. Selfiſhneſs in creatures is a vile and wicked diſpoſition, becauſe they are not the greateſt or beſt of beings; but for God to love and ſeek himſelf above all, is the ſame thing as to love and ſeek what is abſolutely beſt; for ſuch he is. The aims of creatures ſhould reach beyond themſelves, becauſe God, the ſupreme good, lies beyond them; they ſhould all terminate upon him, and ſhould not fall ſhort of him, as they cannot fly beyond him, becauſe he is the ſupreme excellence, and it is not to be found any where elſe. But for this reaſon he muſt aim at himſelf, if he aims at what is abſolutely beſt; for he only is ſo. For creatures to aim principally at their own glory, to ſet themſelves off, and make it their end to gain applauſe, is vanity and criminal ambition, becauſe they are really unworthy of it, and were formed for the glory of another, even of the great Lord of all. But for God to make his own glory his higheſt end, for him to aim at the diſplay of his attributes in all his works, is moſt decent and juſt, and infinitely diſtant from a vain oſtentation, becauſe there is nothing elſe ſo excellent, and ſo worthy of a diſplay: his perfections deſerve to be repreſented in the moſt illuſtrious light, and demand the higheſt veneration and love from the whole univerſe. In ſhort, for God to aim at his own glory in all his actions, is but for him to do juſtice to infinite merit, to diſplay the moſt perfect beauty, to illuſtrate ſu-

preme excellence, to exhibit the ſupreme good in a juſt light, to procure honour to what is in itſelf moſt honourable, and to repreſent the true God in the moſt Godlike manner: and what can be more fit or decent? a lower end than this would be unworthy of him. This is of more real worth than the exiſtence, or the happineſs of ten thouſand worlds. And this is the end which he has uniformly purſued in all the ſteps of creation, providence, and redemption. This particularly was his end in the permiſſion of ſin, and in the form of his adminiſtration towards our guilty world, through a Mediator. As, on the one hand, we are ſure that he is not at all acceſſary to ſin, as its proper producing cauſe, ſo we may be equally ſure, on the other hand, that it has not entered into the world without his permiſſion; that is, it could not have happened if he had hindered it. Now there were undoubtedly very good reaſons for this permiſſion; and one appears evident, namely, that if ſin had never entered, it would have been impoſſible in the nature of things, that ſome of the divine perfections, particularly his puniſhing juſtice and his forgiving grace, ſhould be diſplayed in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures. Pardoning grace could never be diſplayed, if there were no ſin to be pardoned; nor vindictive juſtice, if there were no crimes to be puniſhed: and conſequently, if moral evil had never been permitted, theſe perfections muſt have been for ever idle, concealed, and as much unknown, as if they did not belong to the divine nature. But now there is room for the various œconomy of providence towards guilty creatures, and particularly for the mediatorial ſcheme of ſalvation to our world. And I now proceed to ſhew, that in this ſcheme all the perfections of God have an illuſtrious diſplay, and are repreſented to the greateſt advantage.

Here I would conſider this ſcheme, both abſolutely in itſelf and relatively, as a part of the grand adminiſtration

niſtration towards the rational world. In the latter view, I ſhall conſider it but briefly, and therefore I ſhall begin with it.

Conſidering it relatively, as a part of the divine œconomy towards the rational world, it concurs with the other parts, to ſhow the amiable and wiſe variety of the divine government, or in how many ways God can anſwer his ends, and diſplay his perfections in his diſpenſations towards his creatures.

The ſcriptures give us an account of the divine conduct towards two ſorts of reaſonable creatures, angels and men. And from thence we may alſo learn the wiſe variety of the divine diſpenſations towards them. A part of the angels were preſerved in their primitive ſtate of holineſs, and a part of them were ſuffered to fall into ſin. But the whole human race was permitted to fall, and not one of them continued in their original ſtate of integrity. A part of the angels are happy for ever; and ſo is a number of mankind. But here lies the difference; the angels are continued in a ſtate of happineſs, from which they never fell: but the ſaved from among men are recovered from a ſtate of ſin and miſery, into which they fell, to a ſtate of happineſs, which they had entirely loſt. The angels are entitled to happineſs upon the footing of a covenant of works, to which they have yielded perfect obedience; but men are ſaved entirely upon the plan of the covenant of grace, on account of the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt imputed to them and accepted for them, though it be not originally their own. The angels, having never offended, have no need of a Mediator, or of redemption thro' his blood. But it is through a Mediator only that guilty mortals have acceſs to God; and they owe their ſalvation to his death. As to the fallen angels, there was no Saviour provided for them; but *to us is born a Saviour, who is Chriſt the Lord.* They were never placed in a ſecond ſtate of trial, or under a diſpenſation of grace, but given up to irrecoverable ruin immediately,

immediately, upon their firſt apoſtacy; but our guilty race is placed under a diſpenſation of grace, and made probationers for a happy immortality, after their firſt fall. The devils are irrecoverably loſt for want of a Saviour; but the ſinners from among men periſh by the neglecting a Saviour. All the fallen angels, without one exception, are remedileſsly miſerable; but only a part of mankind ſhare in their doom. The angels ſtood every one for himſelf, but Adam was conſtituted our repreſentative; our concerns were lodged in his hands, and we fell in him. Now what a ſurprizing variety is here! here are ſome holy and happy beings, that were never otherwiſe; and ſome that are recovered to holineſs and happineſs, who had been deeply involved in guilt and miſery: here are ſome rewarded for their own perſonal works of obedience; and ſome are ſaved by the righteouſneſs of another: here are ſome that have acceſs to God without a Mediator, and ſome through a Mediator. Some that have always gone on in an eaſy, natural tenor of uniform obedience; and ſome, that have paſſed through various conflicts and temptations, and aſcended to heaven from the field of battle; here are ſome ſhining in all the glory of native innocence, highly improved, but not new-created; and ſome repaired from their ruins, and formed anew. Here are ſome that periſh without a diſpenſation of grace, and ſome from under a diſpenſation of grace: ſome without the offer of a Saviour, and ſome for rejecting the offer. Here are ſome ſinners abandoned for ever for the firſt offence; and ſome loſt by abuſing their time of trial and the means of their recovery. What various theatres are theſe, on which to diſplay the glory of the divine perfections! what amazing wiſdom to form ſo many different models of government, and ſo conduct and manage them all, as to anſwer the beſt ends! If there be any of the divine attributes that are moſt properly exerciſed upon ſinleſs creatures that never fell, they meet with a proper

object

object in the elect angels. If there be any perfections that cannot be diſplayed but upon the guilty, here are guilty men and angels, in the conduct towards whom they may ſhine in their full glory. If there be any of the divine attributes that may be repreſented in the moſt illuſtrious light, in the recovery of loſt ſinners through the obedience and ſufferings of a Mediator, here are thouſands ſaved in this way from among men, who will be the everlaſting monuments of their amiable glories. If any of the divine perfections can receive more honour by puniſhing abandoned criminals immediately given up to remedileſs ruin, they receive that honour from the everlaſting puniſhment of the fallen angels; or if any of them be diſplayed to greater advantage, by the puniſhment of the ungrateful abuſers of the means of grace, and a time of trial, the impenitent and unbelieving ſons of men are a proper object for them. To all which I may add, that here we have the divine perfections diſplayed in juſtification by works and by grace, in inflicting puniſhment upon the proper offender, and upon Jeſus Chriſt as a ſurety: and whatever glory may be peculiar to one or other of theſe ways, or may reſult from them all conjunctly as one whole, or ſyſtem of government, all that glory redounds to the divine perfections.—Thus you ſee the method of ſalvation through Chriſt, conſidered as a part of the grand ſcheme of the divine government, tends to the illuſtration of the perfections of God: it is one link in the bright chain; and ſhould it be broken or removed, the whole ſyſtem and contexture would be ſhattered or left incomplete. Thus St. Paul tells us, that by the diſpenſations of grace towards the church, are made known, not only to men, but to principalities and powers (that is, to the angels) the manifold wiſdom of God, his variegated and beautifully diverſified wiſdom. Epheſ. iii. 10. And O! that our eyes may be enlightened to behold and admire it! However little this divine ſcheme

be

be regarded in our blind and ungrateful world, the various ranks of angels cannot behold it with careleſs eyes: they ſtoop,* and look, and pry into it, with a divine curioſity and an inſatiable eagerneſs, through all eternity.—But let us now proceed to a more particular ſurvey of this ſcheme, conſidered abſolutely in itſelf; and, in this view, we ſhall find the divine perfections are diſplayed more gloriouſly by it, than by any other; particularly—as to the degree—the harmony—the univerſality—the grace and benevolence—and the wonderful and ſurpriſing manner of the diſplay.

I. By this ſcheme the divine perfections are diſplayed in the higheſt degree poſſible. It appears that ſuch and ſuch attributes not only belong to God, but that they are in him in the higheſt perfection. Goodneſs had already diſplayed itſelf all the world over, in giving life and breath, and all things, to the ſons of men, from age to age. But what are the bleſſings of the ſun and rain, what are the productions of the earth, when compared to his only begotten Son, the man that was his fellow, whom he loved more than ten thouſand worlds! This is an *unſpeakable gift;* this the richeſt gift which even the infinite goodneſs of God could beſtow: almighty love could do no more; this was its *ne plus ultra.* The creation and ſupport of millions of worlds would not have diſplayed ſuch a degree of love and goodneſs as this. God had diſplayed his holineſs and juſtice, and his abhorrence of ſin, by the variety of his judgments upon a guilty world; and he will diſplay theſe attributes to all eternity by the more dreadful puniſhments of hell. But the ſubjects of theſe puniſhments are the creatures of an inferior order; and they have provoked their gracious Sovereign, and moſt juſtly incurred his diſpleaſure,

* 1 Pet. i. 12. "Which things (that is, the things now preached to us by the goſpel, the ſufferings of Chriſt and the glory that ſhould follow) the angels deſire, *parakypſai*, to bend and pry into" with eager eyes.

pleaſure, by their own perſonal crimes. Theſe he may therefore puniſh, and yet ſpare his Son, when he only becomes the ſurety of the guilty, and he is chargeable with no ſin of his own, but only the imputed guilt of others. The dignity of his perſon, the greatneſs of the love of his Father to him, his perſonal innocence, and the benevolence of his deſign, plead for him, and ſeem to promiſe him an exemption, or at leaſt the mitigation of his ſufferings. This now is the greateſt trial that can be made, whether divine juſtice be ſtrictly inexorable, whether God can be prevailed upon by the ſtrongeſt poſſible inducements to connive at ſin, and diſpenſe with his law. Had the doom of the whole created univerſe been ſuſpended on it, it would not have been ſo great a trial. And what was the iſſue? St. Paul will tell you the amazing reſult, *God ſpared not his own Son*, his proper, peculiar Son,* but delivered him up to death. Rom. viii. 32. When the honour of his juſtice and holineſs were at ſtake, even the Father would not relent; but with his own mouth he iſſues out the dread commiſſion, *Awake, O ſword, againſt my Shepherd, againſt the Man that is my fellow, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts; ſmite the Shepherd, ſmite and ſpare not.* Zech. xiii. 7. *Now it even pleaſed the Father to bruiſe him, and put him to grief.* Iſa. liii. 10. And could there be a more aſtoniſhing diſplay of juſtice and the ſacred honours of the divine government? could a more ſtriking proof be given of the infinite holineſs of the divine nature, the malignity of ſin, and his implacable hatred to it? No; all the puniſhments of hell can never give ſuch an illuſtrious diſplay of theſe perfections.† I might ſhew how ſundry other attributes,

* *tou idiou hyiou.*

† How aſtoniſhing was the rigid juſtice of Brutus the Elder, who, in ſpite of all the paſſions of a father, paſſed ſentence of death upon his own ſons, for conſpiring againſt the liberty of their country. While the amiable youths ſtood trembling and weeping before him, and hoping their tears would be the moſt powerful

attributes, particularly wiſdom and veracity, are illuſtrated to the higheſt degree poſſible by this ſcheme; but my time denies me that pleaſure.

II. The divine perfections are diſplayed in the moſt perfect harmony in this method of ſalvation: I mean ſuch of them as ſeemed to jar, to cloud the glory of each other, or to be incapable of being illuſtrated at once, are now reconciled and mingle their beams, and, inſtead of obſcuring, reflect a glory upon each other. The matter was ſo circumſtanced, that it ſeemed really impoſſible to men and angels to diſplay ſeveral divine perfections conjunctly. There ſeemed to be a neceſſity that one or other of them ſhould be eclipſed; for if grace ſhould be diſplayed in the univerſal pardon of ſin, without the infliction of puniſhment, what will become of juſtice? How will the holineſs of God be diſplayed? how will the honour of the

powerful defence with a father! while the ſenate whiſper for the moderation of the puniſhment, and that they might eſcape with baniſhment; while his fellow-conſul is ſilent; while the multitude tremble and expect the deciſion with horror, the inexorable Brutus riſes in all the ſtern majeſty of juſtice, and with a ſteady voice, not interrupted with one ſigh, turning to the lictors, who were the executioners, ſays to them, "To you, "lictors, I deliver them; execute the law upon them." In this ſentence he perſiſted inexorable, notwithſtanding the weeping interceſſions of the multitude, and the cries of the young men calling upon their father by the moſt endearing names. The lictors ſeized them, ſtripped them naked, tied their hands behind them, beat them with rods, and then ſtruck off their heads; the inexorable Brutus looking on the bloody ſpectacle with unaltered countenance. Thus the father was loſt in the judge: the love of juſtice overcame all the fondneſs of the parent: private intereſt was ſwallowed up in a regard to the public good, and the honour and ſecurity of government. This, perhaps, is the moſt ſtriking reſemblance of the juſtice of the Deity that can be found in the hiſtory of mankind. But how far ſhort does it fall! how trifling were the ſufferings of theſe youths, compared to thoſe of the Son of God! How inſignificant the honour of the law and government for which they ſuffered, to that of the divine! How ſmall the good of the public, in one caſe, to that in the other!——See Univerſal Hiſtory, vol. xi. p. 360. Liv. l. ii. c. 5.

the law and the ſacred rights of government be ſecured? But if theſe be illuſtrated by the puniſhment of ſin, how will the goodneſs, grace, and mercy of God appear in diffuſing happineſs, in conferring bleſſings on the unworthy, and in relieving the miſerable! If ſinners are ſaved without a ſatisfaction, how will it appear that God is righteous, and hates all moral evil? or if a full ſatisfaction be made, how will it appear that their ſalvation is of grace? Can ſin be puniſhed, and yet the ſinner eſcape without puniſhment? What device ſhall be found out for this? If ſin paſs unpuniſhed, where is the honour of juſtice? and if all ſinners are puniſhed, where is the glory of grace? If the threatened penalty be not executed, is not the divine veracity rendered ſuſpicious? and if it be executed, what will become of the amiable attribute of mercy? Theſe, my brethren, are a few of the difficulties with which the caſe was embarraſſed and perplexed; and they would have nonpluſed all created underſtandings: nothing but the infinite wiſdom of God could ſurmount them. You ſee that the illuſtration of one ſet of perfections ſeems to caſt a cloud over another ſet. To whatever ſide the Deity inclines, there ſeems to be a neceſſity that he ſhould be but half-glorious, like the ſun under a partial eclipſe. And is there any method in which he may be repreſented as he is, all glorious throughout?

> " A God all o'er, conſummate, abſolute,
> " Full-orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete."
>
> YOUNG.

Yes; ſuch a method is the plan of ſalvation thro' Chriſt. Theſe apparently claſhing attributes harmonize; and are ſo far from clouding each other, that they are each of them diſplayed to greater advantage than if only one had been ſingly exerciſed. They reflect a mutual glory upon each other; and every one appears more illuſtrious in conjunction with the reſt, than if it ſhone alone with its own peculiar glory.

Here juſtice is honoured by the infliction of the puniſhment upon Chriſt, as the ſurety of ſinners; and yet goodneſs, grace, and mercy ſhine in full glory in their ſalvation. They are ſaved upon the footing of ſtrict juſtice, becauſe their ſurety made a complete ſatisfaction for them; and yet they are ſaved through grace, becauſe it was grace that provided and accepted this method of vicarious ſatisfaction. The honours of the divine government are ſecured by Chriſt's perfect obedience to the law; and the philanthropy and mercy of the divine adminiſtration are alſo exhibited in the ſalvation of thoſe who in their own perſons had broken the law. Thus, according to that prophetic oracle, *Mercy and truth are met together*, and agreed; *righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other* in perfect friendſhip. Pſalm lxxxv. 10, 11. Here alſo the wiſdom of God is moſt glorioufly diſplayed, in concerting ſuch an amazing plan as would reconcile theſe ſeemingly oppoſite attributes, and advance the honour of all by the exerciſe of each; and even of that which appeared moſt inconſiſtent with the reſt. This ſcheme bears the peculiar ſeal and ſtamp of the moſt finiſhed wiſdom. In it are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge. O! the depth of the riches of the wiſdom and knowledge of God that appear in it! It was only his infinite wiſdom that could invent ſuch a ſcheme: it furpaſſed all created underſtanding. Hence it is often called *the wiſdom of God in a myſtery; the myſtery which has been hid from ages and generations:* and it is ſaid to reveal things *which eye had not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

To this head I may ſubjoin, that in Chriſt, as Mediator, are reconciled the moſt oppoſite and ſeemingly contradictory characters. Things may be truly and conſiſtently predicted of him, which cannot agree to any one ſubject beſides himſelf. A God-man, divinity and humanity united in one perſon; the Ancient of Days, yet not but 1760 years old; the everlaſting

laſting Father, and yet the virgin's Son, the child of Mary; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and yet the ſervant of ſervants. The higheſt dignity and glory, and the loweſt condeſcenſion and humility meet in him. Here is juſtice puniſhing every the leaſt ſin, and yet grace to pardon the very greateſt of ſinners. Here are infinite majeſty, and the moſt tranſcendent meekneſs: the deepeſt reverence toward God, and a full equality with him: infinite worthineſs of good, and the moſt perfect patience under the ſuffering of evil; a ſubmiſſive, obedient ſpirit, and ſupreme and univerſal dominion! abſolute ſovereignty and humble reſignation. Jeſus conquers by falling, ſaves others by dying himſelf, and the blood of his heart becomes the grand cure for the dying world. In him we ſee the higheſt love to God, and in the mean time the greateſt love to the enemies of God; the greateſt regard to the divine holineſs, and the greateſt benevolence to unholy ſinners. It would be endleſs to enumerate all the oppoſite excellencies and characters that meet and harmonize in Jeſus Chriſt; but theſe may ſuffice as a ſpecimen. And what a ſurprizing complication of things is here! Things that never did, or could meet in any other, harmoniouſly center in him. How juſtly is his name called Wonderful! for as his name is, ſo is he: and as ſuch, he will appear to all that know him to all eternity. How bright and aſtoniſhing is the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt! "That face, in which ſenſe diſcovers nothing but marks of pain and diſgrace; that bloated, mangled viſage, red with gore, covered with marks of ſcorn, ſwelled with ſtrokes, and pale with death, that would be the laſt object in which the carnal mind would ſeek to ſee the glory of the God of life, a viſage clouded with the horror of death; in that face we may ſee more of the divine glory than in the face of heaven and earth."* He is the wiſdom of God, and the power of God; that is, in him is the brighteſt diſplay

* Mac Laurin's Sermon on glorying in the croſs.

diſplay of his wiſdom and power, as well as of his other attributes. But I muſt proceed.

III. The perfections of God are more univerſally diſplayed in the method of ſalvation through Chriſt than in any other way.

The wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of God are diſplayed in the formation of the world; and there are many traces of theſe perfections, as well as of his juſtice, diſcoverable in the government of it. But there is a more full and ſtriking view of theſe exhibited in the government of the world upon the plan of redemption, with the additional illuſtration of ſome other attributes, which would have been unknown, or diſcovered only by ſome feeble glimmerings, if the world had never been governed upon this plan. Here, as I obſerved, the goodneſs of God in all its forms is illuſtriouſly diſplayed: grace in beſtowing free favours upon the guilty and undeſerving; mercy and compaſſion in relieving the miſerable; patience and long-ſuffering in bearing ſo long with provoking obſtinate rebels; whereas if there had been no guilt, miſery, and rebellion permitted to enter into the world; or if no guilt had been pardoned, no miſery relieved, no rebellion endured, there would have been no room for the diſplay of grace, mercy, and patience. Here juſtice ſhines, and ſhines with peculiar advantage: now it appears to be an inſeparable attribute of the Deity, and which he can in no caſe diſpenſe with. Here varacity appears unſtained, in executing the penalty of the law, even upon the darling Son of God. The majeſty of the divine government and its ſacred rights, theſe too are repreſented as inviolable and venerable, and demanding the regard of the whole creation; whereas, if there had been no guilt, there could have been no object upon which the awful honours of divine juſtice might be diſplayed; and if all guilt had been pardoned without ſatisfaction, this majeſtic attribute, ſo venerable and ſo amiable in the character of a ruler, would have been for ever concealed;

concealed; or rather, great umbrage would have been given, that ſuch a perfection did not belong to the ſupreme Governor of the world. And a judge without juſtice, a lawgiver who does not enforce his laws by proper ſanctions, could be agreeable to none but wilful criminals. A petty kingdom of the earth would ſoon become a ſcene of lawleſs violence and confuſion under ſuch a ruler; and how dreadful would be the caſe, if the whole univerſe were under ſuch a head! Here alſo is a moſt illuſtrious diſplay of divine power. Though Chriſt was crucified in weakneſs, yet omnipotence ſhone even upon the croſs. This may ſeem a paradox. "The Jews thought Chriſt's crucifixion a demonſtration of his want of power; hence they upbraided him, that he that wrought ſo many miracles, ſuffered himſelf to hang on the croſs; but this was the greateſt miracle of all. They aſked why he, who ſaved others, ſaved not himſelf: they named the reaſon, without taking notice of it: that was the very reaſon why at that time he ſaved not himſelf, becauſe he ſaved others. The motive of his enduring the croſs was powerful divine love, ſtronger than death: the fruits of it powerful divine grace, the power of God unto ſalvation, Rom. i. 16. making new creatures, raiſing ſouls from the dead: theſe are acts of omnipotence. We juſtly admire the power of the Creator, in the motion of the heavenly bodies; but the motion of ſouls towards God as their center is far more glorious.—The curſe of the law was a weight ſufficient to cruſh a world. So they found it who firſt brought it upon themſelves. It ſunk legions of angels, who excel in ſtrength, from the heaven of heavens to the bottomleſs pit. And the ſame weight hung over the head of man. Before man could bear it, before any perſon could bear his own proportion of it, it behoved, as it were, to be divided into numberleſs parcels, and diſtributed among all mankind, allowing every ſinner his ſhare. Man, after numberleſs ages, would have borne but a

ſmall

ſmall part: the wrath to come would have been wrath to come to all eternity. But Chriſt had ſtrength to bear it all, to bear it all at once, to bear it all alone; and what a glorious manifeſtation of his might was this! of the nobleſt kind of might, that he was mighty to ſave!"*—I might be more particular, but time will not allow.

IV. The ſcheme of ſalvation through the ſufferings of Chriſt gives the moſt gracious, benevolent, and amiable diſplay of the divine perfections. This is evident at firſt ſight, from this conſideration, that by this ſcheme ſinners, ſuch ſinners as we, may be ſaved. O the joyful ſound! ſalvation for the loſt, pardon for the condemned, ſanctification for the unholy, life for the dead! what can be more agreeable to us! Angels contemplate this plan with eternal pleaſure, though they do not need nor receive ſuch bleſſings from it, and how much more ſhould we who are ſo nearly intereſted! Goodneſs, grace, and mercy are always the favourite attributes to guilty creatures ſuch as we are, and where do they ſhine ſo bright in heaven or earth, as in the croſs of our dying Jeſus? But you will ſay, "Suppoſe that the ſins of men had been pardoned, and they ſaved, without the ſufferings of Chriſt in their ſtead; ſuppoſe that the ſtern attribute of juſtice had never been diſplayed in the infliction of puniſhment either upon ſinners, or upon their ſurety, where would have been the injury? would not the Deity have appeared in a ſtill more amiable light, as all benevolence and mercy?" So criminals may ſurmiſe, whoſe intereſt it is that there ſhould be no ſuch attribute as punitive juſtice. But I appeal to angels, who are not parties, as criminals are, but competent judges; I appeal to every lover of virtue and piety; nay, I appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, whether a ruler without juſtice would be an amiable character in their view? Would they chooſe to live under a government where

* Mac Laurin.

where vice, violence, and confuſion were not reſtrained by the execution of the law, but ſhared in the rewards, or at leaſt in the indemnity of perfect obedience? would they chooſe a king, who, through a falſe notion of lenity and mercy, would ſuffer criminals to paſs with impunity? Do not the innocent part of the ſubjects approve of the conduct of their rulers in condemning and executing criminals, as well as in protecting themſelves? and what a murmuring ſpreads through a government, when ſuch are tolerated or approved? The complaints we hear of the exceſſive ſtrictneſs of divine juſtice, the cruelty of eternal torments, &c. is the voice of guilt, and we ſhould regard it no more than the clamours of a band of robbers againſt the juſt laws of their country. Juſtice, my brethren, is not that grim, horrible, and forbidding attribute, which the guilty are apt to imagine; it is not only a majeſtic, but an amiable, agreeable, lovely perfection; it is a part of the moral beauty of the divine nature; it is eſſential to the character of a good ruler; it is neceſſary to the public good; it is abſolutely neceſſary to the exerciſe of goodneſs itſelf. The judicious, well-conducted exerciſe of goodneſs is not a promiſcuous, indiſcriminating communication of happineſs at random; but the communication of happineſs according to the real characters of the ſubjects; it ſuppoſes a diſtinction of the obedient and diſobedient. No government can ſubſiſt without this; and this is the very nature of diſtributive juſtice. Hence it follows that the diſplay of divine juſtice, as well as grace, in the ſufferings of Chriſt, repreſents the divine nature in an amiable light to us, as infinitely worthy of our love as well as of our fear. But,

V. The way of ſalvation through the ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt gives the moſt wonderful and ſurpriſing diſplay of the perfections of God. That is a cauſe of wonder and ſurprize, which is ſtrange and uncommon, new and unexpected; and certainly we can never meet with things more ſtrange, uncommon,

mon, and unexpected, than in the way of ſalvation through Chriſt. I have mentioned ſome of them already with another view: and now I ſhall enumerate a few wonders more. At the creation, a world was brought out of a ſtate of non-exiſtence into being; but in this way, ſinners are brought into a ſtate of complete happineſs and glory out of a ſtate infinitely worſe than that of non-exiſtence. In the old creation, as there were no pre-exiſtent materials, or tendency to exiſtence, ſo there was no reſiſtance: but in the new creation, there is a ſtrong reſiſtance, an obſtinate oppoſition of corrupt nature againſt the operation; and yet, *behold all things are made new!* Who would ever have thought that the apoſtate angels ſhould have been abandoned to the remedileſs ruin, while a Saviour is provided for the inferior order of man! Had Adam been plainly informed that He, by whom he and all things were made, ſhould aſſume his frail and mortal nature, how would he have wondered! And how muſt angels wonder, to ſee the Creator and the creature made one perſon! to ſee their Lord and Maſter become man, a man that in his beſt eſtate was made a little lower than they! How ſtrange, that guilty mortals ſhould be ſaved by the death of the Lord of life! How aſtoniſhing, that a church ſhould be purchaſed by the blood of God! how ſtrange and ſurpriſing, that the reputed ſon of the carpenter, the deſpiſed Nazarene ſhould be made *head over all things! that every knee ſhould bow, and every tongue confeſs to him*, that had been ſo rudely inſulted, and treated as the moſt contemptible malefactor! That the reputed criminal, condemned by Pilate, and crucified on mount Calvary, ſhould be made the only Saviour, and the ſupreme Judge of mankind! How ſtrange, that the blood of the croſs ſhould reſtore peace to earth and heaven, and be the grand remedy of a dying world! that the guilty ſhould be redeemed by the death of the innocent? that death ſhould be conquered by the death of the Author of life!

that

that the greateſt ſin that ever was committed on our guilty globe, namely, the murder of the Son of God, ſhould be the occaſion of the pardon of ſin, even for his murderers! Are not theſe, my brethren, ſtrange, unprecedented things! can you find any thing like them in heaven or earth? theſe are objects of grateful aſtoniſhment to all the celeſtial armies through all the periods of their happy immortality.

I ſhall now conclude with a few reflections and exhortations.

1. You hence ſee what ſhould principally recommend the goſpel-ſcheme to us; namely, that it promotes the glory of God, and gives ſuch an advantageous, amiable, and majeſtic view of his perfections. This is the grand deſign of God, and the only deſign worthy of him in all his works, and particularly in making this conſtitution. It was this conſideration induced the bleſſed Jeſus to go through his painful work, and therefore on this account principally we ſhould delight in this method. And this is the diſpoſition of all thoſe that are conformed to God, and have the ſame mind that was in Chriſt Jeſus. Our own ſalvation ſhould indeed be dear to us, but not merely becauſe it is ours, but becauſe it tends to bring glory to God, the great end of all things. Therefore,

2. They who have never been ſenſible of the glory of God manifeſted in this method of ſalvation, and charmed with the divine perfections diſplayed therein, have not complied with it, and cannot be ſaved by it. None can be ſaved by it, that do not heartily approve of it; and none can rationally approve of it, till they ſee its glory. It is the characteriſtic of all true believers, that *God hath ſhined into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Cor. iv. 6. and iii. 18. It is natural to all to deſire to be ſaved: but they are not ſolicitous about the glory of God: let them be but ſafe, and the ſelfiſh creatures care little for any thing elſe. But heaven itſelf is recommended to a

pious ſoul by the thought that it may be brought thither in a way that tends to advance his glory. Alas! if this be the caſe, how many of you are quite off from the only plan of ſalvation! you ſee no peculiar glories in it, and it does not attract your hearts as the grand ſcheme for illuſtrating the divine perfections; and conſequently, you have no intereſt in it.

3. Hence ſee the aggravated guilt of not accepting this method of ſalvation; it is a hoſtile attempt upon the divine glory; it is the worſt of ſacrilege; and as ſuch, Jehovah reſents it.

4. You may hence ſee how ſecure you are of ſalvation who are upon the goſpel-plan. Your ſalvation in this way is for the glory of the divine perfections. God is ſo far from having any objections againſt it, that on the other hand, his honour is advanced by it; and therefore he will take the ſame care of your ſalvation as he will of his own glory, which is concerned therein.

5. Theſe things may endear the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper to you as exhibiting theſe glories, by ſacred emblems, to your ſenſes: therefore you ſhould eſteem it, and reverently attend upon it.

It is true, this ordinance repreſents the Lord Jeſus in his loweſt ſtate of abaſement. But even in his loweſt ſtate, there appears a peculiar glory. Here I cannot deny you the pleaſure of a quotation from that excellent man Mr. Mac Laurin, once my friend and correſpondent, now the companion of angels, and inhabitant of a better world. "Even the meanneſs of Chriſt did not wholly becloud his glory: many beams ſhone through the diſguiſe. His birth was mean on earth below: but it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly hoſt in the air above. He had a poor lodging; but a ſtar lighted viſitants to it from diſtant countries. Never prince had ſuch viſitants, ſo conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other kings have: but he was attended with multitudes of patients, ſeeking and obtaining

ing healing of ſoul and body; that was more true greatneſs than if he had been attended with crowds of princes. He made the dumb that attended him to ſing his praiſes, and the lame to leap for joy; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to ſee his glory. He had no guard of ſoldiers, nor magnificent retinue of ſervants: but, as the centurion that had both acknowledged, health and ſickneſs, life and death, took orders from him: even the winds and ſtorms, which no earthly power could controul, obey him; and death and the grave durſt not refuſe to deliver up their prey when he demanded it. He did not walk upon tapeſtry; but when he walked on the ſea, the waters ſupported him. All parts of the creation, except ſinful man, honoured him as their Creator. He had no treaſure; but when he had occaſion for money, the ſea ſent it to him in the mouth of a fiſh. He had no barns nor corn-fields; but when he inclined to make a feaſt, a few loaves covered a ſufficient table for many thouſands. Nor was his glory wholly clouded at his death: He had not indeed that phantaſtic equipage of ſorrow that other great perſons have on ſuch occaſions, but the frame of nature ſolemnized the death of its Author: heaven and earth were mourners, the ſun was clad in black, and, if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth trembled under the awful load. There were few to pay the Jewiſh compliment of rending their garments; but the rocks were not ſo inſenſible; they rent their bowels. He had not a grave of his own, but other mens graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of ſuch a tenant in their territories; but he came there, not as a ſubject, but as an Invader, a Conqueror: it was then the king of terrors loſt his ſting, and on the third day the Prince of Life triumphed over him, ſpoiling death and the grave."—Theſe are the things, my brethren, this ordinance was deſigned to commemorate: and certainly theſe are full of glory.

6. Theſe

6. Theſe things may furniſh you with proper materials for meditation this day. Fix your thoughts upon the glories of God diſplayed in a crucified Jeſus, take a ſurvey of the ſcheme of ſalvation through his blood, as bringing not only ſalvation to you, but honour to him; and wonder, love, and adore.

Finally, Let us all fall in with this glorious method of ſalvation; and join with God and Chriſt, and the whole creation, in glorifying God in this way; and in this way, and none elſe, we ſhall find ſalvation for ourſelves.

SERMON XXXVIII.

RELIGION THE HIGHEST WISDOM, AND SIN THE GREATEST MADNESS AND FOLLY.

PSALM iii. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: a good underſtanding have all they that do his commandments.**

WISDOM is a character ſo honourable and ornamental to a reaſonable being, that thoſe who beſt knew the dignity of their own nature, have had no higher ambition than to be eſteemed and called lovers of it. Hence the original of the name Philoſopher,† which ſignifies no more than a lover of wiſdom. On the other hand, there is hardly any character deemed more reproachful, or that is more reſented, than that of a fool. Men are often as jealous of the reputation of their underſtandings as of their morals, and think it as great a reproach to be without ſenſe as without goodneſs. There

* Job xxviii. 28. Prov. i. 7. and ix. 10.

† *Philoſophos*, quaſi *philos ſophias* a lover of wiſdom. This name Pythagoras accepted, when he thought that of *Sophos*, a wiſe man, was too oſtentatious and arrogant for him.

There is a prodigious diverſity in the intellectual capacities of mankind, and their ſouls differ as much as their bodies; but whether it be owing to the intrinſic difference of their ſouls, or to the different formation of their bodies, is not my preſent purpoſe to determine. Some, that ſhare in human nature, give very little diſcoveries of reaſon above the moſt ſagacious ſorts of brutes. The generality are endowed with common ſenſe, which, though it has nothing brilliant and pompous in it, and does not qualify them for high improvements in ſcience, or making a figure in the learned world, yet it is ſufficient for all the purpoſes of life, and the neceſſities of a human creature. There are a few alſo who ſeem raiſed beyond their ſpecies, and perhaps approach near to the lower ranks of angels by a ſuperior genius. Theſe have been the firſt inventors and improvers of uſeful arts and ſciences; which others of inferior underſtanding, are able to put in practice for their own purpoſes, though they had not ſagacity at firſt to diſcover them.

This little world of ours is an improved ſpot in the creation. How vaſtly different an appearance does it now make from its original ſtate of pure nature, when it emerged out of chaos, uncultivated by art! What numerous arts and trades have been found out to furniſh life with neceſſaries and comforts! How deeply have ſome penetrated into the world of knowledge! They have traced the ſecret workings of nature; they have even brought intelligence from the worlds above us, and diſcovered the courſes and revolutions of the planets.

When you ſee theſe diſcoveries, you would conclude mankind to be a wiſe race of creatures; and indeed in ſuch things as theſe they diſcover no inconſiderable abilities. Almoſt every man in his province can manage his affairs with ſome judgment. Some can manage a farm; others are dexterous in mechanics; others have a turn for mercantile affairs; others can unfold the myſteries of nature, and carry their

their ſearches far into the ideal worlds; others can conduct an army, or govern a nation. In ſhort, every man forms ſome ſcheme which he apprehends will conduce to his temporal advantage; and proſecutes it with ſome degree of judgment.

But is this all the wiſdom that becomes a candidate for eternity? Has he a good underſtanding who only acts with reaſon in the affairs of this life; but, though he is to exiſt for ever in another world, and to be perfectly happy or miſerable there, yet takes no thought about the concerns of his immortal ſtate? Is this wiſdom? Is this conſiſtent even with common ſenſe? No; with ſorrow and ſolemnity I would ſpeak it, the moſt of men in this reſpect are fools and madmen; and it is impoſſible for the moſt frantic madman in Bedlam to act more fooliſhly about the affairs of this life, than they generally do about the affairs of religion and eternity. There is ſuch a thing as a partial madneſs; a perſon may have, as it were, one weak ſide to his mind, and it may be ſound and rational in other reſpects. You may meet with ſome lunatics and madmen that will converſe reaſonably with you, and you would not ſuſpect their heads are diſordered, till they touch upon ſome particular point, and then you are to expect reaſon from them no more; they talk the wildeſt nonſenſe, and are governed entirely by their imaginations. Thus, alas! it is with the generality of mankind in the preſent caſe. They are wiſe for this world; they talk and act at leaſt agreeably to common ſenſe; but hear them talk and obſerve their conduct about the concerns of their ſouls, and you can call them reaſonable creatures no longer. They *are wiſe to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge; there is none that underſtandeth; there is none that ſeeketh after God.* To bring them to themſelves by expoſing to them their madneſs, is my preſent deſign.

The text ſhews us the firſt ſtep to true wiſdom, and the teſt of common ſenſe; *The fear of the Lord is the*

the beginning of wiſdom; a good underſtanding have all they that do his commandments. This is ſo frequently repeated, that it may paſs for a ſcripture maxim; and we may be ſure it is of ſingular importance. Job ſtarts the queſtion, *Where ſhall wiſdom be found? and where is the place of underſtanding?* He ſearches nature through, in queſt of it, but cannot find it: he cannot purchaſe it with the gold of Ophir; and its price is above rubies. At length he recollects the primitive inſtruction of God to man, and there he finds it; *To man he ſaid, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* Job xxviii. 28. Solomon, the wiſeſt of men, begins his Proverbs with this maxim, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* Prov. i. 7. And he repeats it again, Prov. ix. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom? and the knowledge of the holy* (the knowledge of thoſe that may be called Saints with a ſneer) *is underſtanding.*

The fear of the Lord, in ſcripture, ſignifies not only that pious paſſion of filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion; hence it is explained in the laſt part of the verſe, by *doing his commandments.* The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of chriſtianity; in ſhort, all that holineſs of heart and life which is neceſſary to the enjoyment of everlaſting happineſs. So that the ſenſe of the text is this: 'To practiſe religion and virtue, to take that way which leads to everlaſting happineſs, is wiſdom, true wiſdom, the beginning of wiſdom, the firſt ſtep towards it; unleſs you begin here, you can never attain it; all your wiſdom without this, does not deſerve the name; it is madneſs and nonſenſe. To do his commandments is the beſt teſt of a good underſtanding; a good ſound underſtanding have all they that do this, all of them without exception: however weak ſome of them may be in other things, they are wiſe in the moſt important reſpect;

reſpect; but without this, however cunning they are in other things, they have loſt their underſtandings; they contradict common ſenſe; they are beſide themſelves. In ſhort, to purſue everlaſting happineſs as the end, in the way of holineſs as the mean, this is wiſdom, this is common ſenſe; and there can be none without this.'

Wiſdom conſiſts in two things; chooſing a right end, and uſing right means to obtain it. Now what end ſo becoming a creature to live for ever, as everlaſting happineſs? And in what way can it be obtained, but in the way of holineſs? Conſult the judgment of God in his word; conſult your own conſcience, or even common ſenſe, and you will find that this is the caſe. Therefore he is a man of ſenſe that purſues this end in this way; but he is a fool, he is brutiſh, that chooſes an inferior end, or that purſues this in a wrong way.

My time will not allow me to do any more than to mention ſome inſtances of the folly and madneſs of ſuch as do not make the fear of the Lord the beginning of their wiſdom.

I. Men will not take the ſafeſt ſide in religion, which their reaſon and ſelf-love carry them to do in other caſes.

It is very poſſible the love of eaſe and pleaſure, and a ſelf-flattering diſpoſition, may prompt your invention to form a plauſible ſyſtem of religion; a religion that admits of great hopes with little evidences, and that allows you many indulgences and lays few reſtraints upon you; a religion purged, as you imagine, from ſome of the melancholy and gloomy doctrines of chriſtianity, and that releaſes you from thoſe reſtraints, ſo painful to a wicked heart, which the holy religion of Jeſus lays upon you. It is very poſſible you may hope you ſhall obtain eternal happineſs without much pains, and without obſerving the ſtrictneſs of univerſal holineſs; you may indulge hopes of heaven, though you indulge yourſelves wilfully in ſin; you

you may flatter yourſelves that God is not ſo inexorably juſt as the ſacred ſcriptures repreſent him; and that his threatenings are only tremendous ſounds, without any deſign to be executed in all their ſtrictneſs; you may flatter yourſelves, that the puniſhments of a future ſtate are not intolerably dreadful, nor of everlaſting duration; you may excuſe and diminiſh your ſins, and make a great many plauſible apologies for them. But are you ſure of theſe things? Have you demonſtration for them, upon which you may venture your eternal all? Think the matter over ſeriouſly again; have you certainty that theſe things are ſo? and are you willing to periſh for ever if they ſhould be otherwiſe? What if you ſhould be miſtaken? What if you ſhould find God as ſtrict and holy as his word repreſents him? What if all his dreadful threatenings ſhould be ſincere and true, and your ſins have infinitely greater malignity in his eyes than in yours? What if in a little time you ſhould find that the ſcriptures give a more juſt account of the puniſhments of hell than your ſelf-flattering hearts ſuggeſted to you, and that they are indeed intolerable and ſtrictly eternal? What if you ſhould find, when it is too late to correct the miſtake, that thoſe neglected, ridiculous things, regeneration, converſion, holineſs of heart and practice, the mortification of ſin, and a laborious courſe of devotion—what if you ſhould find they are abſolutely neceſſary to everlaſting happineſs? What if it ſhould appear that the wilful indulgence of the leaſt known ſin will eternally ruin you? Stand and pauſe, and aſk yourſelves, What if you ſhould find matters thus, quite the reverſe to what you flattered yourſelves? What will become of you then? You are undone, irreparably undone through all eternity. Well, to ſpeak modeſtly, this may be the caſe, for what you know; and is it not then the part of a wiſe man to provide againſt ſuch a dreadful contingency? Will you run ſo terrible a riſk, and yet claim a good underſtanding? Do you eſteem a life

of religion ſo burdenſome, that you had better make ſuch a deſperate venture than chooſe it? Do you eſteem the pleaſures of ſin ſo ſweet, ſo ſolid, ſo laſting, that it is your intereſt to run the riſk of intolerable, eternal miſery, rather than part with them? Can you form ſuch an eſtimate as this while in your ſenſes? No, he is a madman with whom certain pleaſures for a little time, the ſordid pleaſures of ſin, outweigh an eternity of perfect happineſs. He is certainly not in his right mind that would rather be tormented in hell for ever, than lead an holy life, and labour to eſcape the wrath to come. Therefore act in this as you do in other caſes of uncertainty, chooſe the ſafeſt ſide. Believe and regard what God has ſaid; be holy in all manner of converſation; ſtrive with all your might to enter in at the ſtrait gait; accept of Chriſt as your Lord and Saviour. Do this, and you are ſafe, let the caſe be as it will; there are no bad conſequences that can poſſibly follow from this conduct. It will, upon the whole, be the moſt pleaſant for you, even in this life; and your reaſon will tell you, this is a more certain way to eſcape everlaſting miſery, and ſecure eternal happineſs, than the contrary. But if you are reſolutely ſet upon running the riſk, and fool-hardy enough to venture your eternal all upon ſuch improbabilities, not to ſay impoſſibilities, you forfeit the character of a reaſonable being; you are mad in this reſpect, however wiſe you may be in others.

II. Is it not the greateſt folly to believe, or profeſs to believe, the great truths of religion, and yet act quite contrary to ſuch a belief?

How many are there who own God to be the greateſt and the beſt of beings, and yet neglect him, and pay a greater regard to a thouſand other things! They own him lovely, and do not love him; their King, and do not obey him; and their Benefactor, and make no returns of gratitude to him. They confeſs that heaven is better than earth, and yet they purſue

purſue the things of this life, to the neglect of all the happineſs of heaven. They believe their ſouls are of more importance than their bodies; and yet they will not take half the care about them that they take about their bodies. They confeſs that a life of ſin and impenitence is very dangerous, and that it will end in everlaſting miſery; yet, with this confeſſion in their mouth, and this conviction in their conſciences, they will, they obſtinately will go on impenitently in ſin. They own that religion and virtue are excellent things, and yet they never make it the main buſineſs of their life, but live careleſsly without them. They believe they are ſinners, worthy of puniſhment, and yet they are generally as unconcerned as if they were innocent. They believe that Chriſt is the only Saviour of ſinners, and yet they are as little concerned to get an intereſt in him as if they could be ſaved without him. They believe that all the pleaſures of this tranſitory life are infinitely inferior to the pleaſures of religion and the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate; they believe theſe pleaſures will ruin them for ever if they continue in them, and yet they will perſiſt in them, though by this they throw away their everlaſting happineſs, and incur eternal miſery! Thus they believe, or profeſs to believe; and our country is full of ſuch believers: But what abſurd, ſelf-contradicting creatures are they! What madneſs is it to entertain a belief that anſwers no other end but to condemn their practice, and aggravate their ſin? Do they really believe theſe things, or do they not? if not, What folly is it to profeſs to believe them? Do they think to impoſe by an empty profeſſion on Him who ſearches the hearts and the reins; or have they no other end in their profeſſion of religion than juſt to be eſteemed chriſtians by men? Can they think that their faith will indemnify them in contradicting it? or that they may ſin ſafely, becauſe they ſin againſt knowledge? Are theſe the concluſions of a ſound mind? Muſt not a man be out of his ſenſes before he

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can admit them?—But if you ſuppoſe they believe theſe things, it is certain they are entirely mad in this affair. What! to neglect God, and holineſs, and heaven, when they know they are of infinite importance! to chooſe the ways of ſin, when they believe they will end in ruin! Is this the part of a wiſe man? Should a ſick man tell you he is certain to die unleſs he takes ſuch a medicine, and yet you ſhould ſee that he does not take it, but continues to drink the moſt deadly poiſon, what would you think of him? Would you not conclude either that he did not believe himſelf, or that he was diſtracted? But this is the very conduct of many profeſſed believers, who yet think they have no ſmall ſhare of wiſdom. I will not diſpute your wiſdom about your ſecular affairs; you may be wiſe to do evil; but I am ſure in theſe inſtances you are quite delirious; and yourſelves will be convinced of it to your coſt, when God ſhall ſay unto you, *Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee.* Luke xii. 20.

All your pleas to vindicate or excuſe your conduct do but aggravate your folly. Do you ſay "Your luſts are headſtrong and ungovernable, and you cannot reſtrain them?" I doubt not but this is true; but is this a reaſon why you ſhould be ſo eaſy and careleſs? Are your enemies ſo ſtrong? And will you, on that very account be faint and inactive in your reſiſtance? Ought you not to riſe and cry to God for his grace to change your nature, to ſubdue theſe ſtrong ſins, and make you holy, ſince without it you cannot be ſaved? Beſides, conſider whether your pretended excuſe be not a real aggravation. "Your luſts are ſo ſtrong, you ſay, that you cannot reſtrain them." What is this but to ſay that you are ſo wicked, that you have no heart to break off from ſin? and is the inveteracy of your wickedneſs an excuſe for it? Does not common ſenſe remonſtrate againſt ſuch an abſurdity? Do you plead, that "you intend to repent of this inconſiſtent conduct hereafter? But if religion is an excellent thing,

thing, as you profeſs to believe it, why do you not chooſe it now? the ſooner the better. Again, is it not the greateſt folly to indulge yourſelves in a practice that you deliberately intend to repent of? If your preſent conduct be wiſe, why do you intend to repent of it! the very intention implies that you are even now convinced it is fooliſh; and what will your repentance be but a deep ſenſe of your folly? And can there be a greater madneſs than deliberately to do any thing which at the very time you intend to repent of? Is there any thing more abſurd and ridiculous? Is this your conduct in other things? Will you make a bargain, which you know you will afterwards repent of? Will you proſecute a ſcheme which you deliberately intend afterwards to condemn and be ſorry for? Can you do ſuch things, and yet take it ill to be called fools?—Further, Why do you deſign to repent? Is it becauſe you hate ſin? No; for if that was the reaſon, you would immediately forſake it? Is it becauſe you love God and holineſs? No; for then you would devote yourſelves to the ſervice of God immediately, and could not bear a delay. But you intend to force yourſelves upon a little remorſe of conſcience, when the puniſhment of ſin is juſt ready to fall upon you, with no other deſign but juſt to eſcape it. And can you think there is any value in ſuch extorted ſorrows, that proceed not from hatred of ſin, or love to God, but merely from ſelf-love, and a ſervile fear of puniſhment? Can any wiſe man look upon this as repentance to life, or hope that God will accept of it? Finally, Are you ſure of that uncertain hereafter, in which you purpoſe to repent? Is there any man in his ſenſes that dare pretend he is certain of another day? or that he ſhall not die by ſome ſudden accident, or in a delirium, in which he has no time nor compoſure to repent?

III. Is it not the greateſt folly for men to pretend to love God, when their temper and conduct are inconſiſtent with it, and plainly evidential of the contrary? If

If you go round the world with the question, "Do you love God? Do you love him above all?" You will hardly meet with any one but what will answer, "Yes, to be sure; I have loved him all my life." Well; but where are the evidences and effects of this love? If you pretend friendship to men, they expect the expressions of it from you on every occasion; otherwise they will see through the pretence, and pronounce it flattery. They expect you should often think of them with tender affection, perform them all the good offices in your power, study to please them, be tender of their characters, solicitous about their interest, and delight in their society. These are the inseparable effects of love; and certainly, if you love God, your love will have such effects, especially since, if you love him at all with sincerity, you love him above all other persons and things. But men will insist upon it that they love him above all, and yet very seldom or never think of him with tender affection: they love him above all, and yet indulge themselves in sin, that abominable thing which he hates: they love him above all, and yet have little solicitude about pleasing him, and doing his will: they love him above all, and yet are unconcerned about the interests of religion in the world, which are his interests, and careless about his honour and glory; they love him above all, and yet have no pleasure in conversing with him in prayer and the other ordinances of his grace, where he holds spiritual interviews with his people. They love him above all, and yet love and delight in a thousand other things more than him; and they would highly resent it if one should begin to question the sincerity of their love; and they hope God will accept of it, and reward it. But can men in their senses think that this will pass for true and supreme love with him, that knows all things? They cannot expect that their fellow-creatures should thus be imposed upon; and is it not the greatest madness to imagine they can thus impose

impoſe upon Omniſcience? Indeed it may aſtoniſh any man that knows what love is, to find that the moſt of men pretend they love God, even while they are giving the moſt glaring evidences of diſaffection to him; and after all, it is almoſt impoſſible to convince them that they do not thoroughly love him. What madneſs has ſeized the world, that they will not receive conviction in ſuch a plain caſe! What mean thoughts muſt they have of God, when they think to put him off with ſuch an empty compliment, and hypocritical profeſſion!

IV. Is it not the greateſt folly for men to hope for heaven, when they have no evidences at all of their title to it, or fitneſs for it?

Is it not the dictate of common ſenſe, that no man can be happy in any thing but what he has a reliſh for, and delights in? Can an illiterate ruſtic find pleaſure in rigid mathematical demonſtrations, and learned ſpeculations, or a man of pleaſure and buſineſs in the aſcetic mortified life of a hermit? Can a man whoſe taſte is vitiated by ſickneſs, enjoy happineſs in the entertainments of a feaſt? No, nothing can make a man happy, but what is ſuited to his reliſh and diſpoſition. And yet there are thouſands that have no reliſh for the enjoyment of God, no pleaſure in thinking of him, or converſing with him, no delight in his ſervice and acts of devotion, who yet hope to be for ever completely happy in theſe exerciſes in heaven. The happineſs of heaven, as I have often told you, conſiſts in ſuch things as theſe, and how can you hope to be happy there while you have no pleaſure in them! There are thouſands who have no delight in any thing holy or religious, but only in the gratifications of their ſenſes and the enjoyment of earthly things, who yet hope to be happy in heaven, in the wants of all ſenſual and earthly enjoyments. There are thouſands who now diſguſt the ſociety of the religious as intolerably preciſe, who yet flatter themſelves they ſhall be perfectly happy in the company

of

of ſaints and angels, where the meaneſt is incomparably more holy than the moſt ſanctified creature upon earth. And have they a ſound underſtanding who can entertain ſuch abſurd hopes? Does not common ſenſe tell us, that God, who does every thing wiſely, will bring none to heaven but thoſe whom he has made fit for it beforehand? and that as none ſhall be ſent to hell but thoſe that were previouſly wicked, ſo none ſhall be admitted into the world of glory but thoſe who are previouſly made holy? None firſt begin to be holy in heaven or wicked in hell: both parties bring with them thoſe diſpoſitions which are fit for their reſpective places and employments. How abſurd is it therefore to hope for heaven, while you have no heavenly diſpoſitions? You may as well hope to ſee the ſun without eyes. Further, God has aſſured you in his word, and you profeſs to believe him, that without regeneration, faith, repentance, and intereſt in Chriſt, and univerſal holineſs, you cannot enter into his kingdom; and yet, are there not ſome of you who are fooliſh enough to hope for it, though deſtitute of all theſe? Has he not told you that drunkards, ſwearers, unclean, malicious, contentious perſons, liars, and the like, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? And yet, though you know theſe are your characters, and the world knows it too, you will hope for admiſſion to it, in defiance of God's moſt expreſs repeated declarations! What madneſs is this! and how peculiar to this affair! The debauchee will not expect happineſs in mortification and devotion, nor the prodigal in hoarding up uſeleſs wealth; and yet thus abſurdly will they act in their expectations of heaven!

V. And laſtly, Is it not the greateſt madneſs to be more concerned about the affairs of time than thoſe of eternity?

It is plain to any man in his ſenſes, that the happineſs and miſery which are extreme, and which ſhall endure for ever, are of infinitely greater importance than

than all the enjoyments and all the ſufferings of this tranſitory ſtate. And you will hardly meet with any man but will own this to be his belief. But, alas! into what conſternation may it ſtrike us, when we ſurvey the conduct of the generality! Are they as much concerned about the eternal world to which they are haſtening, as to the concerns of time? Are they as laborious and zealous to obtain everlaſting happineſs as to gain the riches of this world, or to gratify their ſenſual appetites? Are they as ſolicitous to avoid everlaſting miſery as to ſhun ſickneſs, poverty, or any temporal calamity! Are they as cautious of ſinning, which ruins their ſouls for ever, as of drinking poiſon, which may endanger their health or temporal life! Do not many of you know it is quite the reverſe with you! Are not the concerns of this life the principal objects of your thoughts, your cares, and labours! And what can be a more conſummate folly! You practically prefer a trifle of an hour to a ſubſtantial good of endleſs duration. You are careleſs about everlaſting torment, and yet cautiouſly ſhun the light ſufferings of a few moments. It matters not what you think, or ſay in this matter; it is your practice that determines the affair; and does not that ſhew that time outweighs a vaſt eternity with you! And what can be more abſurd! If you ſhould throw away an eſtate to obtain a farthing, if you ſhould run upon a drawn ſword to eſcape a prickle, if you ſhould prefer pebbles to crowns and kingdoms, darkneſs to light, or one luxurious meal to the ſupport of your whole life, it would not be ſo ſhocking a piece of madneſs.

I might give you many more inſtances of the madneſs of thoſe who do not begin this wiſdom with the fear of the Lord, but the inferences from the ſubject are ſo numerous and important, that I muſt reſerve the reſt of the time for them.

1. Since there is ſo much folly in the world in matters of religion, how aſtoniſhing is it that it is not

univerſally contemned and ridiculed, or pitied and lamented! If men act a fooliſh part in other things, they ſoon furniſh matter of laughter and contempt to the gay and witty part of mankind; and the thoughtful and benevolent view them with compaſſion. But let them act ever ſo fooliſhly in the concerns of eternity, there is hardly any notice taken of it; the abſurdity is no way ſhocking; nay, the generality commend their conduct by imitating it themſelves; and if any are ſo wiſe as to find fault with this madneſs, they are termed fools themſelves, and the general laugh is turned againſt them. How unaccountable is this, that men who act prudently in other things, and are eaſily ſhocked with a mad and frantic behaviour, can view the folly of mankind in this reſpect without horror, or perhaps with approbation! The only reaſon for it is, that the generality are madmen in this reſpect, and the folly is approved becauſe it is common. To be ſingularly wiſe is to be fooliſh, in the opinion of the world; and to be fools with the multitude, is the readieſt way to get the reputation of wiſdom. They prove religion to be folly, by a majority of votes; and as many who are fools in this affair are wiſe in other reſpects, their judgment is implicitly ſubmitted to. But, pray, ſirs, uſe your own reaſon, and judge impartially for yourſelves, and I am ſure you muſt ſee the wild abſurdity of their conduct. Be nobly ſingular in beginning wiſdom with the fear of the Lord; and whatever others think of you now, God, angels, and good men will applaud your wiſdom; and even thoſe who now ridicule it, will approve of it at laſt.

2. With what an ill grace do the irreligious contemn and deſpiſe thoſe that make religion their great concern, as weak, ſilly creatures! Sinners, let your own reaſon determine, can there be any thing more fooliſh than your own behaviour? And does it become you to brand others with the odium of folly? Alas! you have reaſon to turn your contempt upon yourſelves,

yourſelves, and to be ſtruck with horror at your own wilful ſtupidity. Do you ſet yourſelves up as the ſtandards of wiſdom, who want ſenſe to keep out of everlaſting ruin? Are you wiſe men who throw away your eternal happineſs for the trifles of time? No, they only are wiſe who are wiſe for eternity. You may excel them in a thouſand things; nature may have favoured you with a better genius; you may have had a more liberal education; you may be better acquainted with men and books; you may manage your ſecular affairs with more diſcretion; in ſuch things you may be wiſer than many of them. But they are wiſe for eternity! they have ſenſe to eſcape everlaſting burnings! they have wiſdom to obtain eternal happineſs! and this is a more important piece of wiſdom than all your acquiſitions. The wiſdom of Solomon, of Socrates, or Plato, is the wildeſt madneſs without this. How abſurd is it therefore for you, without this, to arrogate the character of men of wiſdom, or even of common ſenſe!

3. How abſurd is it for men to pretend they will not turn their thoughts to religion, leſt it ſhould make them melancholy or diſtracted! Alas! ſinners, you cannot be more ſo than you are already; and you will never come to yourſelves till, with the prodigal, you determine to return to your father's houſe. And will you continue fools through the fear of becoming ſuch? I can aſſure you I would rather be the wildeſt frantic in Bedlam, than be that wretch who ruins his ſoul for fear of running mad by thinking of it.

4. If the fear of the Lord, religion, is the perfection of wiſdom, how unreaſonably does the world charge it with making people mad! There are multitudes that loſe their ſenſes by exceſſive ſorrows and anxieties about ſome temporal affair; many more than by religion; and yet they never fall out with the world on this account. But when any one, that ſeemed thoughtful about religion, loſes his ſenſes, then religion be ſure muſt bear all the blame; and

ſinners

ſinners are glad to catch at ſuch a handle to expoſe it. Melancholy perſons are wont to derive terrors from every thing in their reach; and, among other things, will pore upon all thoſe doctrines of religion that can affright them. But this melancholy, as ſuch, is a bodily diſorder, and therefore has no more religion in it than a fever or a conſumption. It is indeed very poſſible that too intenſe application of the mind to divine things, with a deep concern about our everlaſting ſtate, may be the occaſion of melancholy; but there is nothing peculiar in this; let the mind be exceſſively attentive to any thing, it will have the ſame effect. How many diſorders do men contract by their eager purſuit of the world! and yet the world is their favourite ſtill. But if one here and there ſuffers by occaſion of religon, O! they bleſs themſelves from it, and think it is a terrible gloomy thing.—Thoſe that are pious, let me tell you, are many of them much ſuperior to the wiſeſt of us in all accompliſhments; and they are generally as far from madneſs as their neighbours. Therefore drop this ſenſeleſs ſlander, and be yourſelves holy, if you would be truly wiſe.

5. Since men are ſuch fools in matters of religion, ſince they cenſure it with ſo much ſeverity and contempt, how aſtoniſhing is it that God ſhould ſend down that divine, heaven-born thing, religion, into our world, where it is ſo much neglected and abuſed! where the celeſtial gueſt meets with but few hearts that will entertain it; where its profeſſors neglect it, contradict it, and by their practice call it madneſs; and where even its friends and ſubjects frequently treat it very unkindly! What aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion and grace is it, that God has not left our mad world to themſelves, ſince they are ſo averſe to be reclaimed! But lo! he hath ſent his Son, he hath inſtituted the goſpel, and a thouſand means of grace, to bring them to themſelves!

6. And laſtly, Hence we may infer, that human nature is exceedingly depraved and diſordered. I think this

this is as plain as any diſorder incident to the body. Men are univerſally indiſpoſed as to religion; and on this account our world is, as a great genius calls it, "the Bedlam of the univerſe." The ſame natural faculties, the ſame underſtanding, will, and affections, that render us able to act with prudence in the affairs of this life, are alſo ſufficient for the affairs of religion; but, alas! with regard to this they are diſordered, though they exerciſe themſelves aright about other things. They can acquire the knowledge of languages and ſciences; but, alas! they have no diſpoſition to know God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom he has ſent.—They underſtand how to trade, and carry on ſchemes for this world; but they will not act wiſely for eternity. They have ſenſe enough not to run into the fire, or to drink poiſon; but they will run on in the ways of ſin to everlaſting miſery. They will aſk the way when they have loſt themſelves; but how hard is it to bring them to inquire, What ſhall I do to be ſaved? They will aſk help for their bodies from their fellow-creatures, but how hard is it to bring them in the poſture of earneſt petitioners to aſk immortal bleſſings for their ſouls from God! In ſhort, they can contrive with prudence, and act with vigour, courage and perſeverance in the affairs of time; but in the concerns of religion and eternity they are ignorant, ſtupid, languid, and careleſs. And how can we account for this, but by ſuppoſing that they are degenerate creatures, and that their nature has ſuffered a dreadful ſhock by the firſt fall, which has deprived them of their ſenſes! Alas! this is a truth too evident to be denied!

SERMON

SERMON XXXIX.

REJECTION OF CHRIST A COMMON, BUT MOST UNREASONABLE INIQUITY.

MARK xii. 6. *Having yet therefore one ſon, his well-beloved, he ſent him alſo laſt unto them, ſaying, They will reverence my ſon.*

THERE is no ſin more common or more pernicious in the chriſtian world than an unſuitable reception of Jeſus Chriſt and the goſpel. It is not only the ſin of profeſſed unbelievers and profane ſcoffers, but it often hides itſelf under the cloak of religion, and a profeſſion of faith. It is of ſo ſubtle a nature, that it is often unſuſpected, even by thoſe who are deſtroyed by it: and it is of ſo deadly a nature, that nothing can ſave a ſoul under the power of it. A ſoul that has the offer of Chriſt and the goſpel, and yet neglects him, is certainly in a periſhing condition, whatever good works, whatever amiable qualities or appearances of virtue it may be adorned with. *If our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt. He that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* 2 Cor. iv. 3. John iii. 18.

This was the ſin of the Jews in Chriſt's time. and this brought temporal and eternal ruin upon them. To repreſent this ſin in a convictive light is the primary deſign of this parable.

The bleſſed God had choſen the Jews, out of the world, to be his peculiar people, and diſtinguiſhed them with the gracious privileges of his church. Hence they are repreſented as his vineyard, encloſed from the wilderneſs of the world, and furniſhed with every thing neceſſary to render it fruitful. And hence God

God is repreſented as expecting fruit from them, as a man expects it from his vineyard; which intimates the reaſonableneſs of their obedience: it is what any one would expect; who would judge by what is due and reaſonable. But it does not intimate that God does properly look for or expect what will never come to paſs; for the certainty and univerſality of his fore-knowledge excludes all poſſibility of a diſappointment. It is ſpeaking to us in our own language, which we are moſt likely to underſtand; but it muſt be explained agreeably to the perfection of the nature of God, and not according to the imperfection of ours. The ſcribes and Phariſees, the prieſts and rulers of the Jews, who were intruſted with the management of their church and ſtate, are repreſented by the huſbandmen, to whom this vineyard was leaſed or rented, and they were obliged to make annual payments of a part of the fruit. The ſucceſſion of ſervants ſent to demand the income of fruit in its ſeaſon, ſignifies the prophets and other meſſengers of God ſent to the Jews to call them to bring forth the fruits of holineſs. But inſtead of obeying the call, they treated them abuſively, perſecuted and killed them, and refuſed that return of duty which God demanded, and which his diſtinguiſhing mercies towards them rendered ſo due upon the footing of gratitude. After repeated trials to no purpoſe by theſe ſervants, the great God reſolves to make one trial more, and that by his own Son, his only Son, his beloved Son. Him he will ſend to theſe rebellious huſbandmen. And he preſumes that, bad as they are, they would at leaſt reverence his Son, and count themſelves highly honoured in having ſuch a meſſenger ſent to them. He might juſtly have ſent his army to deſtroy them, who had murdered his former ſervants; but inſtead of this, he ſends his Son with propoſals of peace once more. He preſumes ſuch clemency will melt down the rebels, and make them aſhamed of their former conduct. *They will reverence*

ence my Son: as if he ſhould ſay, "Though they have wickedly abuſed and ſlain my ſervants, ſurely they will not dare to treat my ſon in the ſame manner. Surely, the very ſight of him muſt command awe and reverence. This will alſo make them aſhamed of their baſe ingratitude and cruelty to my former meſſengers."* When the omniſcient God repreſents himſelf as preſuming or expecting that they would receive his Son in a friendly manner, it does not intimate, as I juſt obſerved in a ſimilar caſe, that he is defective in knowledge as to things future, or liable to diſappointment; but it only expreſſes, in the ſtrongeſt manner, the reaſonableneſs of the thing expected. It is ſo reaſonable, that any one who judges only according to the reaſonableneſs of the thing, and has no view of futurity, would certainly look for it. It is ſo reaſonable, that God himſelf would expect it, were he not omniſcient, and incapable of being deceived by the moſt plauſible appearances. In this view God expected (that is, he looked upon it as infinitely reaſonable) that the Jewiſh rulers ſhould reverence his Son. But, alas! when they ſaw him, they were raiſed to a ſtill higher pitch of rebellion and cruelty. They ſeized the Son himſelf, caſt him out of his own vineyard, and with wicked hands crucified and ſlew him. On this account the vineyard was taken from them, and let out to others, who ſhould pay the great Proprietor his fruit in its ſeaſon; that is, they were caſt out of the church, and the Gentiles received in their ſtead, who would make a better uſe of their privileges.

This is the primary ſenſe of the parable, as referring to the Jews of that age. But it will admit of a more extenſive application. It reaches us in theſe ends of the earth, and all the nations of the world, to

* The word, *entrepomai*, ſignifies "to be flushed with ſhame," as well as "to reverence:" and ſo it may be rendered here, "They will be ſtruck with ſhame at my Son;" that is, "at the ſight of him."

to whom the goſpel has been propoſed: and in this latitude I would conſider the text.

The world had gone on for four thouſand years in wickedneſs, in ſpite of all the means uſed for its reformation by lawgivers, prophets, and philoſophers, and by the providence of God. Perſuaſions, warnings, chaſtiſements, mercies, and whatever had a tendency to bring them to repentance, had been uſed with them. Philoſophers had often reaſoned; legiſlators had preſcribed; prophets had carefully inſtructed, allured with promiſes, and deterred with threatenings, and carried their heavenly credentials in their hands; angels had appeared and converſed with men upon extraordinary occaſions; Jeſus, the great Angel of the covenant, had given frequent preludes of his incarnation; nay, Jehovah himſelf had deſcended, and publiſhed his law with Godlike pomp in the ears of his ſubjects on mount Sinai. But all this would not do! the world ſinned on ſtill, impenitent and incorrigible. And what ſhall be done in ſuch a deſperate caſe? What expedient remains to be tried? After ſo many meſſengers abuſed, perſecuted, and killed, who will go upon ſo dangerous a meſſage again? There is indeed the Son of God, the great co-equal of the Supreme Divinity, if he would undertake it, perhaps ſomething might be done. But O! who can dare to hope for ſuch condeſcenſion from one ſo high! Who can expect ſuch a favour for rebels ripe for vengeance! Who can hope the Father will give him up! My text ſeems to hint ſundry objections againſt it. He is his Son, his well-beloved Son, and he has but one Son; but one of his rank, though he has produced ſo many worlds. And will he part with his Son, his well-beloved, his only Son, and ſend him upon ſuch a miſſion; a miſſion ſo difficult, ſo dangerous, in which ſo many of his ſervants have loſt their lives? Who could believe that even divine love and mercy could go ſo far, had we not the teſtimony of God in the goſpel for it! *Having*

one Son, his well-beloved, he ſent him alſo; he ſent even* him, dear as he was, as well as his ſervants of an inferior order. So much had he at heart the ſalvation of his rebellious creatures!

But obſerve the time when he ſent him: He ſent him laſt. He did not ſend him till every other method was tried in vain, and the caſe was found to be deſperate without him. He did not ſend him till it appeared, from many experiments, that there was abſolute need of him. Lawgivers, prophets, philoſophers, and other real or pretended reformers, had a clear ſtage, they had the world to themſelves for four thouſand years! but in all this time they did nothing to the purpoſe. Hence we are led to make this remark, which is of great importance to the right underſtanding of the goſpel.

That the Son of God was ſent into the world as a Saviour in a deſperate caſe. It appeared, after a long courſe of trial, that when he undertook the caſe, there was no relief from any other quarter. And hence, by the way, it follows, that we can never receive him in that view in which he was ſent, until we are deeply ſenſible that our caſe is deſperate; that is, that we can obtain relief from no other.

But probably his being ſent laſt has a farther meaning. It ſeems to intimate, that he is the laſt extraordinary meſſenger that God will ever ſend; that the diſpenſation of the goſpel is the laſt trial that ever he will make with rebellious men, the final effort of divine grace for their ſalvation; and that ſuch as are not recovered by it will be for ever given up as deſperate, and no farther means uſed with them. What an alarming thought is this to ſuch of you (and no doubt there are ſuch among you) who have enjoyed the goſpel, the diſpenſation of the Son of God all your days, without receiving any ſpecial benefit from it! If theſe means will not do, you are not to expect better, but muſt periſh as incurables. If

* —*kai auton.* The conjunction *kai* often ſignifies *even*; and if ſo rendered here, it would perhaps be more emphatical.

If we conſider the unworthineſs of our guilty world, and the high character of the bleſſed Jeſus, as his Father's only and well-beloved Son, we could have little reaſon to expect he would come into our world as a Saviour. But ſuppoſe he ſhould come! ſuppoſe he ſhould leave all the glories of his native heaven, and aſſume the humble nature of man, converſe with mortals, inſtead of the heavenly courtiers, and conflict with the calamities of life, inſtead of enjoying the pleaſures of paradiſe! Suppoſe he ſhould come himſelf, as a meſſenger of his Father's grace, and with his own bleſſed lips aſſure our guilty race that God is reconcileable! Suppoſe he ſhould die upon a croſs for us, that he might at once purchaſe redemption, and confirm the tidings of it! Suppoſe, I ſay, ſuch wonders as theſe ſhould happen! what then is to be expected? O! may it not reaſonably be expected that this divine Meſſenger will be received with univerſal welcome? that every heart will glow with his love, and every mouth be filled with his praiſe? May it not be reaſonably expected that his appearance among guilty men would caſt them all upon the knee as humble penitents, and that now, overcome with his love, they would become his willing ſubjects for the future, and bitterly lament the baſeneſs and ingratitude of their paſt diſobedience? Is not this the moſt reaſonable expectation that ever was formed? God ſpeaks after the manner of men in my text: and therefore, when he ſays *They will reverence my Son*, it intimates, that this would be the univerſal expectation of mankind, and of all reaſonable creatures who conſider the reaſonableneſs of the thing. "They will reverence my Son: ſurely they will. Wicked and ungrateful as they are, the very ſight of him muſt melt them into gratitude and obedience. Though they have rejected, perſecuted, and murdered prophets and lawgivers, and all my other ſervants, yet ſurely they will reverence my Son." O! is not this a moſt reaſonable expectation? Who would apprehend

prehend the contrary in ſo plain a caſe! Who would fear that ſuch a divine Saviour, a Saviour in ſo deſperate a caſe, ſhould be received with neglect! Who would fear that ſinners, on the brink of everlaſting deſtruction, would be careleſs about ſuch a Deliverer! We cannot think they would act thus, without ſuppoſing them madmen, as well as ſinners, and that they have loſt their reaſon and ſelf-love, as well as moral goodneſs.

But, alas! theſe are only the preſumptions of reaſon from the reaſonableneſs of the thing, and not matters of fact gathered from obſervation of the actual conduct of mankind. However likely it be from appearances that the Son of God will univerſally meet with an affectionate reception from creatures that ſtand in ſuch abſolute need of him, and however improbable it be, in an abſtract view, that ſuch creatures ſhould neglect him, yet it is a melancholy notorious fact, that Jeſus Chriſt has but little of the reverence and love of mankind. The prophetical character given of him long ago by Iſaiah ſtill holds true, *He whom man deſpiſeth; he whom the nations abhor*, Iſaiah xlix. 7. *he is deſpiſed and rejected of men.* The riches, honours, and pleaſures of the world are preferred to him. His creatures are loved more than himſelf. Nay, ſin itſelf, the moſt hateful thing upon earth, or even in hell, is more beloved. The ſalvation he purchaſed with his blood is looked upon as hardly worth ſeeking. His favour is not earneſtly ſought, nor his diſpleaſure carefully ſhunned. In ſhort, he has but a ſmall place, and is but of little importance in the thoughts, the affections, and converſation of mankind. This is a moſt melancholy and aſtoniſhing thing; it may ſpread amazement and horror through the whole univerſe, but, alas! it is fact; a plain fact, though but few are convinced of it, and a melancholy fact, though few lament it. My chief deſign at preſent is to faſten conviction upon the guilty; a very unacceptable deſign, but not therefore the leſs neceſſary or uſeful.

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In proſecuting it, I intend,

I. To ſhew what kind of reception it may juſtly be expected we ſhould give to the Son of God.

II. To conſider the reaſonableneſs of that expectation. And,

III. And laſtly, To ſhew how different a reception he generally meets with from what might be reaſonably expected.

Hearken, my brethren, hearken attentively, to what you are ſo nearly concerned in. And to engage your attention the more, let this conſideration have weight with you, that your making light of this matter is a ſtrong preſumption that you make light of Chriſt, and do not give him that reception which he demands. Your being unconcerned in the trial of this caſe is ſufficient to prove you guilty. I am,

I. To ſhew you what kind of reception we may reaſonably be expected to give to the Son of God.

In general, we ſhould give him a reception agreeable to the character which he ſuſtains, and agreeable to the deſigns upon which he was ſent into our world, or to thoſe views in which he appears in it. We ſhould treat every one according to his character: reaſon expects that we ſhould do ſo, and God requires it. Therefore we ſhould treat this divine Meſſenger according to his character.

More particularly, Does Jeſus Chriſt appear in our world under the character of a Saviour in a deſperate caſe, a relief for the remedileſs, a helper for the helpleſs? Then it may reaſonably be expected that his appearing in our world under this character would immediately flaſh univerſal conviction upon mankind, that they are altogether undone and helpleſs in themſelves, and can obtain relief from no other quarter. It may reaſonably be expected that they ſhould give up all their proud ſelf-righteous conceit of themſelves, and abandon all truſt in their own righteouſneſs and good works; for till they do this, they can never receive him in the character; that is, as a Saviour in a deſperate

a deſperate caſe. It may reaſonably be expected, they ſhould welcome Chriſt as the great, the only Deliverer, and give up themſelves entirely to him, to be ſaved by him, who alone is mighty to ſave. And it may reaſonably be expected, that every heart ſhould be tranſported with admiration, joy, and gratitude at his appearance: and a contrary temper towards him can proceed from nothing but ſtupid ignorance of our ſin and danger, and an ungrateful, baſe diſaffection to him.

Does Jeſus appear among men as a great High-Prieſt, making atonement for ſin? Then it may juſtly be expected that we ſhould place all our truſt upon the virtue of his atonement, and that all hands ſhould be eagerly ſtretched out to receive thoſe pardons which he offers, in conſequence of his propitiatory ſacrifice. Does he appear to deſtroy the works of the devil, and to ſave men from ſin by making them holy, and are the influences of the holy ſpirit intruſted to his diſpoſal to renew their nature, and implant every grace and virtue in their hearts? Then, who would not expect that we would all fall in with his deſign, all form a noble conſpiracy againſt ſin, ſeek for the ſanctification of our hearts, and earneſtly apply to him for the influences of divine grace to make us holy! Again, does Chriſt appear in the character of a Mediatorial King, inveſted with all power in heaven and earth, and demanding univerſal homage? Then it may reaſonably be expected that we ſhould all bow the knee in humble ſubmiſſion, all make his will the rule of our conduct, and labour after univerſal obedience. Further, Does he appear both as the publiſher and the brighteſt demonſtration of the Father's love? and has he diſcovered his own love by the many labours of his life, and by the agonies and tortures of his croſs? O! may it not be expected we ſhould return him love for love! the love of worms for the love of a God! an obedientiall love for his bleeding, dying love! May it not be expected that

that the ſight of a crucified Saviour, dying in agonies of love and pain, ſhould melt every heart, and draw the whole world to his arms! He himſelf had this reaſonable expectation: *I*, ſays he, *if I be lifted from the earth* (that is, ſuſpended on a croſs) *will draw all men unto me.* If ſuch love will not draw, what can do it? May it not be expected that this ſtrong aſſurance that their offended Sovereign is reconcileable, and ſo much in earneſt to pardon obnoxious rebels, would at length make them ſenſible of their baſe ingratitude, would melt them down into ingenuous generous ſorrows for their unnatural rebellion againſt ſo good a God, and determine them to cheerful obedience in future? Again, Does Chriſt exhibit himſelf as able to ſave to the utmoſt all that come unto God through him, and as willing as able, as gracious as powerful? Then may it not reaſonably be expected that all the unbelieving fears and tremblings of deſponding penitents ſhould vaniſh for ever, that they ſhould all fly to his arms with cheerful hope and humble confidence, and do him the honour, and themſelves the kindneſs, to believe themſelves ſafe, upon their compliance with his invitation? Further, Does Chriſt appear in the character of a great Prophet ſent to publiſh his Father's will, to reveal the deep things of God, and to ſhew the way in which guilty ſinners may be reconciled to God? a way which all the philoſophers and ſages of antiquity, after all their perplexing ſearches, could never diſcover! May it not then be reaſonably expected that we ſhould be all attention to his inſtructions, that we ſhould reſign our underſtandings to him as our Teacher, and readily believe what he has revealed, and particularly that we ſhould cheerfully comply with the only method of ſalvation contained in the goſpel? Once more, Does Chriſt aſſume the auguſt character of ſupreme Judge of the quick and the dead, and muſt we all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt? Then it may be expected we ſhould

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all humbly revere and adore him, fear to offend him and make him our enemy, and prepare for our appearance before him. In ſhort, conſidering him as the ſupreme Excellency, it is infinitely reaſonable we ſhould love and eſteem him as the Phyſician of ſick ſouls; that we ſhould put ourſelves under his all-healing hands, and ſubmit to his preſcription; as our Advocate, that we ſhould preſent all our petitions in his name, and depend upon his interceſſion for acceptance. And as he is all in all in the mediatorial diſpenſation of religion under which we live, the only religion for ſinners, that he ſhould be all in all to us.

This is a brief view of the reception which we ought to give to the Son of God, upon his appearance in our world. Unleſs we receive him thus, we can receive no benefit from him; but muſt incur the aggravated guilt of rejecting him. *But to as many as thus receive him, to them he gives power to become the ſons of God, even to as many as believe in his name.* John i. 12.

Do not imagine that none are concerned to give him a proper reception but thoſe with whom he converſed in the days of his fleſh. We at the diſtance of 1700 years and ſix or ſeven thouſand miles from the time and place of his appearance in human form, are as much concerned with him as they. He is an ever-preſent Saviour, and he left his goſpel on earth in his ſtead, when he went to heaven. It is with the motion of the mind, and not of the body, that ſinners muſt come to him; and in this ſenſe we may come to him, as properly as thoſe that converſed with him. He demands the reverence, love, and truſt of mankind now, as well as ſeventeen hundred years ago; and we need his righteouſneſs, his influence, and his ſalvation, as well as the ſinners of Judea, among whom he appeared in perſon. Nay, as his glory has now pierced through the cloud that obſcured it in the days of his fleſh, and as he is exalted to the height

height of honour and dignity, it may be expected with ſtill more reaſon that we ſhould reverence him, and ſubmit to him in his high character. He is not now the object of our bodily ſenſes, we cannot ſee and handle him; but he is now an object for the acts of the mind with peculiar advantage. That muſt be a mere lump of fleſh, or a beaſt, and not a man, that can love nothing but what he can ſee and feel. Spiritual and intellectual things are the moſt proper objects for all reaſonable creatures. Therefore, though Jeſus be not now within reach of our ſenſes, yet reaſon and faith may reach him, and perceive his glories: and it is reaſonably expected we ſhould admire, love, truſt, and ſerve him. This, I ſay, is reaſonably expected of us. I now proceed,

II. To ſhew the reaſonableneſs of the expectation, that we ſhould give the Son of God a welcome reception.

Here full evidence muſt ſtrike every mind at firſt ſight. Is there not infinite reaſon that infinite beauty and excellence ſhould be eſteemed and loved? that ſupreme authority ſhould be obeyed, and the higeſt character revered? Is it not reaſonable that the moſt amazing diſplay of love and mercy ſhould meet with the moſt affectionate returns of gratitude from the party obliged? ſhall the Creator die for his creatures, the ſovereign for his rebellious ſubjects, the great law-giver transfer the penalty of his own law upon himſelf, in order to remove it from obnoxious criminals? ſhall he die in extremities of torture, and write his love in characters of blood? O ſhall he do this, and is it not infinitely reaſonable that his creatures, that his rebellious ſubjects, that obnoxious criminals ſhould be tranſported with wonder, joy, and gratitude; and that ſuch miracles of love ſhould engroſs their thoughts, their affections, and converſation? If we form our expectations from what we find in fact among mankind in other caſes, ſure we may expect the Son of God would meet with ſuch a

reception in our world; the thouſandth part of this kindneſs would excite gratitude between man and man, and he would be counted a monſter that would not be moved with it. And ſhall kindneſs from worm to worm, from ſinner to ſinner, excite love and gratitude? and ſhall not the infinite mercy of God towards rebellious creatures inflame their love and gratitude? Is this the only ſpecies of kindneſs that muſt paſs unnoticed? Is Jeſus the only Benefactor that muſt be forgotten? Is it not reaſonable, and would not any one expect, that the periſhing would willingly accept of a Saviour? that the guilty would ſtretch out an eager hand to receive a pardon? that the diſeaſed would apply to the phyſician? that inexcuſable offenders ſhould repent of their cauſeleſs offences againſt the beſt of beings? and that needy dependent creatures ſhould embrace the offer of happineſs? Can any thing be more reaſonably expected than this? Is it not as reaſonable as to expect that creatures that love themſelves, will ſeek their own happineſs, or that the miſerable will accept of deliverance? In ſhort, no man can deny the reaſonableneſs of this expectation without denying himſelf to be a creature: no man can deny its reaſonableneſs, without aſſerting that the higheſt excellency ſhould be deſpiſed, the higheſt authority rejected, the richeſt goodneſs contemned, that rebellion and ingratitude is a virtue, and ſelf-deſtruction a duty; that is, no man can deny this, without commencing a monſter, abjuring his reaſon, and embracing the moſt extravagant and impious abſurdities in its ſtead. I am afraid I ſhall not be able to gain the temper and practice of all of you to my ſide in this affair, but I am ſure if you are men, and believe the goſpel, I have already brought over your judgment and conſcience. Your judgment and conſcience declare, that if it be reaſonable for a child to reverence a tender affectionate parent, if it be reaſonable you ſhould love your life, or your own happineſs, that then certainly it is infinitely reaſonable

reaſonable you ſhould give ſuch a reception as has been mentioned to the bleſſed Jeſus. Happy for us, happy for the world, if we could as eaſily prove that the expectation is as much founded upon actual facts as upon reaſon. But, alas! here the evidence turns againſt us. In ſuch a wicked diſordered world as this, it would be a very deceitful method of reaſoning, to infer that things are, becauſe they ſhould be. This introduces what comes next under conſideration, namely,

III. And laſtly, To ſhew how different a reception the Son of God generally meets with in our world, from what might reaſonably be expected.

Here a moſt melancholy ſcene opens. And O! that it may pleaſe the bleſſed ſpirit to affect our hearts deeply with the ſurvey of it! forgive me if I make my addreſs as pungent and particular as I can, and ſpeak directly to the conſcience of each of you. The caſe really requires plain dealing, becauſe without it you are not likely to be convinced, and, without conviction, you can never return, nor be reformed.

Let me put you all upon a ſerious ſearch, what kind of reception you have given to Jeſus Chriſt.—You have lived all your days under his goſpel; you profeſs his religion; you own him as the Author of your hopes, and what kind of treatment have you given him in theſe circumſtances? It is high time for you to inquire into your behaviour.

Are not ſome of you ſenſible that you have never received him as a Saviour in a deſperate caſe? No, you have never ſeen your caſe to be indeed deſperate. Your proud hearts have not been brought ſo low. You have not had ſuch an affecting view of your guilt and depravity, and the imperfections of your beſt works, and of the holineſs and juſtice of God and his law, as to make you ſenſible you were undone and helpleſs in yourſelves, that your own righteouſneſs could by no means recommend you to God, and that you muſt periſh for ever, unleſs Jeſus Chriſt, out of mere

mere mercy, would undertake to ſave you: unleſs you have had an affecting ſenſe of your undone condition, you have certainly never received him as a Saviour.

Again, Is it not evident that Jeſus Chriſt has had but little ſhare in your thoughts and affections? Do not the things of this periſhing world gain the pre-eminence? Have you not a thouſand thoughts of a thouſand trifles for one affectionate thought of Jeſus, the darling of his Father? Have you not been generally thoughtleſs of him all your lives? Take the time that is neareſt to you as a ſpecimen, which ſurely you have not yet forgot. Recollect now how many affectionate thoughts you have had of him the week paſt, or even upon this ſacred morning, when you had this ſolemn worſhip immediately in view. May not even this ſhort review convince you that you are guilty of the moſt abſurd and unreaſonable thing in the world; a thing which appears ſo improbable in an abſtract view, that one would hardly believe you would venture upon it; I mean neglecting the Son of God, who has viſited our world upon ſuch deſigns of love?

Again, Is Jeſus Chriſt the favourite ſubject of your converſation? Is his dear name the ſweeteſt ſound your lips can pronounce? And do you love to ſit with his few friends in our guilty world, and talk over the wonder of his love, till your hearts burn within you, like the diſciples in conference on the way to Emmaus? *Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth ſpeaketh;* and were he uppermoſt in your hearts, he would have a proper ſhare in your converſation. Or if you ſhould mingle in a company (and ſuch company is every where to be found) where prudence would not ſuffer you to dwell upon this darling ſubject, would the reſtraint be painful to you, and would his love, like a ſmothered fire in your hearts, ſtruggle to break out, and vent itſelf—vent itſelf at leaſt in ſome retired corner in his preſence,

ſence, if you could not enjoy the pleaſure of letting it flame out in the ſociety of his creatures? But, alas! is not this the reverſe of your true character! Are you not diſguſted, or ſtruck ſilent, as ſoon as the converſation takes this turn! With horror I think of it—to converſe concerning Jeſus Chriſt is generally deemed needleſs, impertinent, or oſtentatious, by creatures that profeſs themſelves his diſciples, redeemed by his blood! And does not this horrid guilt faſten upon ſome of you!

Farther, Are not your hearts deſtitute of his love? If you deny the charge, and profeſs that you love him, where are the inſeparable fruits and effects of his love! Where are your eager deſires and pantings after him! Where is your delight to converſe with him in his ordinances! Where your anxiety, your zeal, your earneſt endeavours to ſecure his favour! Where is your conſcientious obſervance of his commandments! for he himſelf has made this the teſt of your love to him; *then*, ſays he, *are ye my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you.* John xv. 14. And again, *If any man love me, he will keep my words.* John xiv. 28. Does not the evidence from this inquiry turn againſt you! Are you not convicted in your conſciences, that if theſe are the inſeparable fruits of love, you are entirely deſtitute of it? Is it not evident to yourſelves, that your own pleaſure, your own worldly intereſt, your honour or eaſe, is the general rule of your conduct, without any regard to his will?

Inquire farther, Have you learned to intruſt your ſouls in his hands, to be ſaved by him entirely in his own way! Or do you not depend, in part at leaſt, upon your own imaginary goodneſs? Do you not wonder and ſtart at the doctrine of grace, and ſecretly diſguſt it! Does it not appear ſtrange to you, to be told, that, after all your good works, God will deal with you entirely as guilty ſinners, void of all goodneſs, and have no regard at all to your ſuppoſed merit in the diſtribution of his mercy, but entirely

to

to the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt? Are you not utter ſtrangers to that exploit of faith which caſts a poor guilty depraved ſoul, void of all goodneſs, upon the mere mercy of God, through Jeſus Chriſt, who juſtifies the ungodly? For this purpoſe the Son of God came into the world; and you do not give him a proper reception, but wickedly reject him as well as the Jews, unleſs you thus intruſt yourſelves to him.

The evidence grows upon me as I proceed; and I cannot but wonder you do not perceive it yourſelves. Can any thing be more plain than that you make light of Chriſt! that you chooſe to have as little to do with him as poſſible! that you have no delight in his ſervice! Does not your own conſcience now tell you, there are this and that, and a thouſand things, that you have more pleaſure in! Do not your hearts fly off from him, whenever they are urged to approach him! When you are a little awakened with a ſenſe of your guilt and danger, and ready with eager eyes to look about for a Saviour, alas! how naturally do you relapſe into careleſſneſs and ſecurity! How ſoon do you drop your purpoſe of ſeeking after him with unwearied endeavours, till you find him! how ready are you to take up with any thing in his ſtead! A little repentance and reformation are ſubſtituted in his place. You would rather get eaſe to your conſciences from any quarter than from him. Like Judas, you ſell him for a few pieces of ſilver; that is, you would rather part with him than give up your over-eager purſuit of earthly things.

A thouſand ſuch facts might be eaſily produced, which ſadly prove that the bleſſed Jeſus does not meet with that reception from multitudes among us which his character demands. Indeed their not being eaſily convicted of ſin is an evidence they are guilty; for if they had a real regard for him, they would be concerned to inquire how the caſe ſtands, or how their hearts are diſpoſed towards him. And a little honeſt inquiry would ſoon lead them into the truth.

And

And now I have a few queſtions to propoſe to ſuch of you as are guilty of neglecting the Son of God, or have never given him that reception that might juſtly be expected of you; queſtions of the utmoſt importance, which I beg you would put home to your own hearts.

The firſt is, Do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jeſus, you contract the moſt aggravated guilt? It is the Son of God, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, that you neglect. And muſt not the Father reſent it? Do you not touch his honour in a very tender point? and will he not muſter up all the forces of omnipotence to avenge the affront? Since you neglect him, whom the Father loves; him, whom all the heavenly armies adore; him, whom all good men upon earth treat with the higheſt honour; ſince you neglect a perſon of infinite glory and dignity, your rightful Sovereign and only Saviour, how deep is your guilt! what a horrid exploit of wickedneſs this! neither heathens nor devils can ſin up to ſuch a pitch: devils cannot, becauſe no Saviour was ever provided for them, or offered to them; and heathens cannot, becauſe a Saviour was never revealed to them. You ſtand without a rival by your horrid preeminence in guilt. To you may be applied the words of Jeſus, as well as to the unbelieving Jews: *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they would not have had ſin;* that is, they would not have had ſin of ſo aggravated a nature; *but now they have no cloak for their ſin*, John xv. 22. they are utterly inexcuſable; *for they have both ſeen and hated me and my Father.* John xv. 24.

The next queſtion I would aſk you is, Muſt not your puniſhment be peculiarly aggravated, ſince it will be proportioned to your guilt? To be puniſhed not only for ſins againſt the law of nature, but againſt revelation, againſt the goſpel of grace, againſt the love of a crucified Saviour—how dreadful muſt this be! *He that deſpiſed Moſes's law died without mercy*, ſays St.

St. Paul: *of how much ſorer puniſhment* (ſorer than dying without mercy! O terrible!) *ſuppoſe ye ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.* Heb. x. 29. You may make light of this now, but O! it will not prove light in the iſſue. Here let me mention a moſt alarming conſideration: The love that God bears to his Son is the great ſource of all our hopes; it is becauſe he loves him, that he accepts of his atonement for our ſins; it is becauſe he loves him, that he forgives and loves believing ſinners for his ſake; it is becauſe he loves the head, that he ſhews ſuch favour to the members; but as to ſuch as neglect his Son, even the love which the Father has for him becomes a ſource of peculiar terror, and prompts him to ſignal vengeance. 'If he infinitely loves his Son, he muſt infinitely reſent it to ſee him neglected and ſlighted by others. If he loves him he will avenge the affront offered him; and the more he loves him, the more ſeverely he muſt reſent and avenge it. How wretched then is their condition, upon whom even the love of God for his Son calls aloud for vengeance! and how ſignal will the puniſhment be, that the Father's love for his Son will inflict upon the deſpiſers of him!

The third queſtion I would propoſe to you is, How do you expect to eſcape this ſignal vengeance, if you ſtill continue to neglect the Lord Jeſus? Anſwer the apoſtle's queſtion if you can: *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?* Heb. ii. 3. You cannot expect Jeſus will be a Saviour while you treat him thus: and if he refuſe to whom will you turn?—What angel or ſaint can ſave whom he is determined to deſtroy? If he be againſt you, who can be for you? Remember the text—the Father ſent his Son laſt into the world. He comes laſt, and therefore if you reject him, you need not look for another Saviour. You muſt take him or none; take him or periſh for ever.

I would further aſk you, If your guilt and danger be ſo great, and if in your preſent condition you are ready

ready every moment to be ingulphed in everlaſting deſtruction, does it become you to be ſo eaſy and careleſs, ſo gay and merry! If your bodies were ſick, you would be penſive and ſad, and uſe means for their recovery: if your eſtates were in danger, you would be anxious till they were ſecured: if you were condemned to die for a crime againſt civil government, you would be ſolicitous for a pardon. In ſhort it is natural for man to be penſive, anxious, and ſad in circumſtances of danger; and it is ſhocking to the common ſenſe of mankind, to ſee one thoughtleſs and gay in ſuch circumſtances. Can you be eaſy under ſuch a load of guilt? careleſs under a ſentence of condemnation? and negligent, when the poſſibility of deliverance is ſet before you? I would not willingly ſee you ſorrowful and dejected; but when your caſe calls for it, when your temporal ſorrow may be medicinal, and ſave you from everlaſting pain, when it is as neceſſary in your circumſtance as ſickneſs at the ſtomach in the operation of phyſic, then I cannot form a kinder wiſh for you, than that your hearts may be pierced and broken with penitential ſorrows. You have, in your manner, commemorated the birth of a Saviour this Chriſtmas;* that is, you have danced and carouſed, and ſinned to his honour. But now I come after, and demand in his name another kind of reception for him: I call you to the ſorrowful work of repentance for your ill-treatment of him. Inſtead of ſuch mirth and extravagance, would it not have been more proper for you to have liſtened to St. James's advice, *Be afflicted, and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heavineſs.* James iv. 9. *Humble yourſelves under the mighty hand of God;* that mighty hand which can cruſh ten thouſand worlds, and which is lifted up againſt you to revenge the quarrel of his beloved Son. Can you return home this evening as thoughtleſs and merry as uſual? Well, your career will ſoon

* This Sermon is dated Jan. 16, 1758.

be at an end: your vanity and trifling will ſoon be over. Perhaps, as Jeremiah denounced to the falſe prophet, *this year thou ſhalt die;* Jer. xxviii. 16. and O! that will ingulph you in everlaſting ſorrows.

Therefore what would you now think of making one honeſt trial, before it be too late, to obtain an intereſt in that Saviour whom you have hitherto neglected? O! will you not make trial, whether the diſaffection of your hearts towards him, inveterate as it is, may yet be ſubdued by divine grace? whether he, who prayed with his dying breath, even for his murderers, will not have mercy upon you? whether the virtue of his blood is not ſtill ſufficient to cleanſe you from all ſin? O! will you give up the matter as deſperate, before you make a thorough trial?

Your caſe is indeed very diſcouraging, but it is not yet hopeleſs; if I thought it was, I would not ſay one word to you about it, to torment you before the time. But I can aſſure you upon the beſt authority, of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, that if you now give him that reception which his character requires, he will receive you into favour as though you had never offended him, and make you for ever happy. Therefore, come ye poor, guilty, periſhing ſinners, fly to the arms of his mercy, which are opened wide to embrace you. Cry for the attractive influences of his grace, which alone can enable you to come to him, and let there be joy in heaven this day over repenting ſinners upon earth!

SERMON

SERMON XL.

THE DOOM OF THE INCORRIGIBLE SINNER.

PROVERBS xxix. 1. *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.*

A Proverb is a ſyſtem of wiſdom in miniature: it is a pertinent, ſtriking obſervation, expreſſed in a few words, that it may be the more eaſily remembered; and often in metaphorical language, that it may be the more entertaining. A collection of proverbs has no connection, but conſiſts of ſhort, independent ſentences, each of which makes full ſenſe in itſelf; and therefore, in explaining them, there is no need of explaining the context; but we may ſelect any particular ſentence, and conſider it ſeparately by itſelf.

Such a collection of wiſe ſayings is that book of the ſacred ſcriptures, which we call the Proverbs of Solomon. Wiſe men in all ages, and in all languages, have often caſt their obſervations into the conciſe ſignificant forms of proverbs; but the ſages of antiquity, eſpecially, were fond of this method of inſtruction, and left legacies of wiſdom to poſterity, wrapt up in a proverbial dreſs; many of which, particularly of the Greek philoſophers, are extant to this day. Solomon choſe this method of recording and communicating his wiſe obſervations as moſt agreeable to the taſte of the age in which he lived. The ſacred memoirs of his life inform us, that *he ſpake three thouſand proverbs*. 1 Kings iv. 32. Of theſe the moſt important and uſeful were ſelected probably by himſelf, and afterwards by the men of Hezekiah; that is, by perſons appointed by Hezekiah to copy them off; and they

they are conveyed down to all ages in this cabinet of precious jewels, the Book of Proverbs.

Among the many ſignificant and weighty ſayings of this wiſeſt of men, the ſolemn monitory proverb in my text deſerves peculiar regard: *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.* *

The requeſt of a friend, and my fears that this proverb may have a dreadful accompliſhment upon ſome of my hearers, have induced me to make it the ſubject of your meditations for the preſent hour. And O! that the event may ſhew I was divinely directed in the choice!

This proverb may be accommodated to all the affairs of life. In whatever courſe a man blunders on, headſtrong, and regardleſs of advice and admonition, whether in domeſtic affairs, in trade, in politics, in war, or whatever it be he purſues by wrong meaſures with incorrigible obſtinacy, it will ruin him at laſt, as far as the matter is capable of working his ruin. To follow the conduct of our own folly, and refuſe the advantage we might receive from the wiſdom of others, diſcovers an uncreaturely pride and ſelf-ſufficiency; and the career of ſuch a purſuit, whatever be the object, will always end in diſappointment and confuſion. In this extent perhaps, this adage was intended by Solomon, who was a good œconomiſt and politician, and well ſkilled in the affairs of common life, as well as thoſe of religion.

But he undoubtedly intended it ſhould be principally referred to matters of religion. It is eſpecially in theſe matters it holds true in the higheſt ſenſe; that

* *He that being often reproved*—This in the original, is *a man of reproofs*; and it may either ſignify as our tranſlators underſtand it, "a man often reproved;" or it may mean, "a man often reproving;" that is, a man that often reproves others, if he harden his own neck, while he pretends a great zeal to reduce others under the yoke of obedience, he ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, &c. But the firſt ſenſe appears more pertinent and natural, and therefore in that view I only conſider it.

that *he that being often reproved, hardeneth* himself, *shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

He that being often reproved—This is undoubtedly our character. We in this congregation have been often reproved, and that in various forms, and by various monitors. We have been reproved from heaven and earth, by God, men, and our own consciences; and, I might add, by the irrational creation, and even by infernal spirits.

Men of various classes have reproved us. It is the happiness of several of us to live in families where we are often reproved and admonished with the tender, affecting address of a father and a master, who are deeply concerned that their children and domestics should be their companions in the heavenly road, and be effectually warned from the alluring paths of sin and ruin. And have not our affectionate mothers often become our monitors, and gently, yet powerfully reproved us, with that forcible eloquence which could only proceed from the heart of a woman and a mother?—or if our parents have been cruelly deficient in this noblest office of love, has not God raised up unexpected reprovers for us, in a brother, a sister, or perhaps a poor despised slave? And who can resist the force of an admonition from such an unexpected quarter?—And have not some of us found an affectionate, faithful monitor in the conjugal state; a husband or a wife, that has reproved the vices or the negligence and carelessness of the other party; and, by a striking example at the least, if not in more explicit language, given the alarm to greater diligence and concern in the affairs of religion and eternity? Such are powerful, though modest and private assistants to the ministers of the gospel, and O! that they had but more assistance from this quarter! To encourage the few among you that improve the intimacy of this near relation for so important and benevolent a purpose, let me remind you of St. Paul's tender excitement to this duty, given one thousand seven

ſeven hundred years ago: *What knoweſt thou, O wife! whether thou ſhalt ſave thy huſband? or how knoweſt thou, O huſband! whether thou ſhalt ſave thy wife?* 1 Cor. vii. 16. The tender names of huſband and wife have ſo much force in them, as may irreſiſtibly conſtrain us to perform all the kindeſt offices in our power to thoſe who bear them. But O! to ſave a huſband! to ſave a wife! to ſave thoſe dear creatures from everlaſting miſery! how great, how important the kindneſs! and by ſo much the more pleaſing, by how much the dearer the perſons are to whom it is ſhewn!—But to return—If we are not ſo happy as to be agreeably ſurrounded with ſuch honeſt reprovers in our own houſes; yet, bleſſed be God, we live in a neighbourhood where we may meet with one of them here and there. Has not a pious friend or a neighbour dropt a word now and then in converſation which might have ſerved, and perhaps was intended, as a ſerious admonition to you? Alas! have you never had a friend in the world, who has ſometimes taken occaſion to talk ſolemnly and pungently with you about the neglected concerns of your ſouls? or at leaſt, has not his example been a ſtriking leſſon to you? Alas! is it poſſible one ſhould live in this congregation, without enjoying the benefit of a reprover? Sure, there are ſtill ſome among us to bear their teſtimony againſt ſin, and eſpouſed the deſerted cauſe of religion. But if the friends of religion have been ſilent (and indeed they are generally too modeſt in this reſpect) yet have you not ſometimes received an accidental undeſigned reproof even from the wicked? juſt as Caiaphas once propheſied of the death of Chriſt, and its bleſſed conſequences. Not to obſerve, that their eagerneſs and indefatigable induſtry in purſuing their pleaſures, whether they place them in honour, riches, or ſenſuality, and in ſerving their guilty luſts, in ſpite of all reſtraints, may ſerve as a pungent reproof of your lukewarmneſs and careleſſneſs in the purſuit

ſuit of the pleaſures of religion and immortality, ſo much more noble and intereſting. But I ſay, to take no notice of this, have they not at times rebuked you in more direct terms? Have they not twitted and reproached you to this purpoſe, "I thought you, that pretend to ſo much ſanctity, would not dare to venture upon ſuch a thing." Or, "See the ſaint, the communicant, the preſbyterian drunk—ſee his fraud and villany—ſee him as vain and frolickſome as his neighbours; ſure, we that make no ſuch profeſſion, may take ſuch liberties, ſince ſuch ſaints do ſo."—Such reflections as theſe, my brethren, however ſarcaſtical and malignant, blind and bitter, have all the keenneſs of the ſharpeſt reproof. And O! that none of us may ever give any occaſion for them! but if offences ſhould come to occaſion them, may our hearts always feel their force! Thus may we derive good out of evil; be warned from ſin by ſinners; and reſtrained in our career to ruin by thoſe who are themſelves ruſhing into it!—But though all around you, both ſaints and ſinners, ſhould refuſe to be your monitors, how many ſolemn warnings and reproofs have you had from the pulpit! You have heard many miniſters of Chriſt, who have been your ſolemn admoniſhers in the dread name of their Maſter. And it is now eleven or twelve years ſince I have began to diſcharge the painful and unacceptable office of a reprover of ſin and ſinners among you—And what kind and liberal aſſiſtance have I received in my office, from the other ſide of the vaſt ocean, in the many excellent books which Britiſh piety and charity have furniſhed us with! Our friends, whoſe voice cannot reach you, have ſent over reprovers into your houſes; reprovers that ſpeak particularly to the poor, eſpecially to the neglected ſlaves. In ſhort, I know no ſpot of America ſo happy in this important reſpect as Hanover.

Thus have you been reproved by men from all quarters. And certainly ſo loud, ſo general, ſo repeated

peated an admonition, even from men, muſt have great weight. But who can reſiſt an admonition from heaven! Surely, if Jehovah, the great Sovereign of the univerſe, condeſcends to be your reprover, you muſt immediately take the reproof, and ſet about a reformation. Well, this office he has condeſcended to ſuſtain. He has himſelf become your monitor; and that in various ways, both mediately and immediately: mediately, by his word and providence; and immediately, by his bleſſed Spirit, whoſe office it is to *reprove the world of ſin.* John xvi. 9.

The word of God has reproved you; has honeſtly laid before you the deſtructive conſequences of ſin, and denounced the divine diſpleaſure againſt you on its account. All its commands, prohibitions, and diſſuaſives of various forms, are ſo many friendly warnings and admonitions to you. He conveys his reproofs through your eyes and your ears, when you read and hear his word; and ſometimes, I doubt not, he has made the hardeſt heart among you feel his rebukes, and tremble under them. In ſhort, you muſt own yourſelves, that if any of you go on obſtinately in ſin and periſh, it will not be becauſe the word of God did not act a faithful part towards you, but becauſe you preſumptuouſly diſregard its moſt ſolemn and affectionate warnings.

Again; God has often reproved you by his providence. His providence has kindly chaſtiſed you with perſonal and relative afflictions; with ſickneſs and pains, bereavements, loſſes, and diſappointments. Providence has admoniſhed you with the ſtriking voice of ſick beds, dying groans, ghaſtly corpſes, and gaping graves, in your families, or neighbourhoods, or perhaps in both. How many among us, in a few years, have been brought down to the gates of the grave, that they might enter into a ſerious conference with death and eternity, which they were ſo averſe to in the giddy, unthinking hours of health and hurry of buſineſs! And what narrow eſcapes, what

what ſignal unexpected deliverances has Providence wrought for you in thoſe ſeaſons of danger and diſtreſs, that you might enjoy a longer ſpace of repentance! How many of our friends and neighbours have ſickened and died, for the admonition of ſurvivors! Providence has pitched upon one here and there, that was wont to ſit among us in our religious aſſemblies, and made him an example and a warning to the reſt. They are gone before, to ſhew us the way; and put us in mind, that our turn alſo will ſoon come.* Sickneſs and death, expiring agonies, pale corpſes,

> The kneel, the ſhroud, the mattock, and the grave,
> The deep damp vault, the darkneſs, and the worm—

theſe are very ſolemn monitors; and that heart is hard indeed, that does not feel their reproof.

The providence of God has alſo reproved us, in common with our countrymen, by the public calamities

* Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
To damp our brainleſs ardors, and abate
That glare of life which often blinds the wiſe.
Our dying friends are pioneers, to ſmooth
Our rugged paſs to death; to break thoſe bars
Of terror and abhorrence nature throws
Croſs our obſtructed way; and thus to make
Welcome as ſafe, our port from every ſtorm.
Each friend by fate ſnatch'd from us, is a plume
Pluck'd from the wing of human vanity,
Which makes us ſtoop from our aerial heights,
And dampt with omen of our own deceaſe,
On drooping pinions of ambition lower'd,
Juſt ſkim earth's ſurface, ere we break it up,
O'er putrid pride to ſcratch a little duſt,
And ſave the world a nuiſance. Smitten friends
Are angels ſent on errands full of love;
For us they languiſh, and for us they die:
And ſhall they languiſh, ſhall they die in vain?—
Shall we diſdain their ſilent, ſoft addreſs;
Their poſthumous advice, and pious prayer?
Senſeleſs as herds that graze their hallow'd graves,
Tread under foot their agonies and groans;
Fruſtrate their anguiſh, and deſtroy their deaths?
YOUNG.

mities that have hovered over, or fallen upon our land and nation; and particularly by the ravages and desolations of war. Providence has commissioned Indian savages and French Papists to be our reprovers, and loudly admonished us with the horrid roar of cannons, the clangor of martial trumpets, and all the dread artillery of ruin and death. What ear among us has not heard, what heart has not trembled, at this terrible warning!

Thus, and in a thousand other ways, has Providence concurred with the word, and feelingly reproved us with its fatherly rod. And we should always remember, that the hand of Providence is the hand of God, whatever instruments he is pleased to use.

But has he not often laid aside all instruments, and reproved you more immediately by his Spirit? Has not his Spirit been long and frequently striving with you; reproving you of sin; alarming you with apprehensions of your danger: exciting in you good resolutions, and serious thoughts of reformation? Has not the blessed Spirit at times borne home the word upon your hearts with unusual power, and roused your conscience to fall upon you with terrible, though friendly violence?—Which leads me to add,

You have been your own monitors; I mean your consciences have often admonished and warned you; have whispered in your breasts, that "this course of vice and irreligion will not do: this carelessness and indifferency in the concerns of your souls, this stupid neglect of God and eternal things, will not end well." Conscience has often honestly pronounced your doom: "Thou art a guilty, wicked creature, under the displeasure of God. Thou art destitute of true vital religion, and hast no title to the divine favour. If thou die in this condition, thou wilt be undone for ever." Thus has conscience warned you; and you have no doubt sometimes sweated and agonized under its chastisements. Though you have prepos-

terously

ouſly laboured to bribe it, or ſuppreſs it by violence; yet it has ſtill borne at leaſt a faint teſtimony for its Maſter, and againſt you. Thus you always carry a reprover in your own boſoms wherever you go: and though every mouth around you ſhould be ſilent, this will ſpeak, if you do but attend, and give it fair play.

I may add, that even the irrational creation is your monitor; and in ſilent, but forcible language, remonſtrates againſt your conduct. Can you hear the muſicians of the air in every buſh warbling out their grateful anthems to their Maker, without being convicted of your guilty ſilence in his praiſe? Can you ſee the ſun invariably rolling in the path firſt marked out for him by his Maker and Lord, without feeling yourſelves reproved for your numberleſs deviations from the path of duty? Do not the regulated, ſtated revolutions of the ſeaſons, and of night and day, ſenſibly reprove your neglect of the returns of your hours of devotion? In ſhort, does not all nature cry out againſt you? Is not every thing you ſee obedient to its Maker's laws, but man? man, who ſhould claim the precedence in obedience, as he is appointed lord of the lower creation.*

Nay,

* How natural are theſe reflections of that great and good man, Dr. Watts!

With ſteady courſe thy ſhining ſun
Keeps his appointed way:
And all the hours obedient run
The circle of the day.
But, ah! how wide my ſpirit flies,
And wanders from her God!
My ſoul forgets the heavenly prize,
And treads the downward road!
The raging fire and ſtormy ſea
Perform thine awful will;
And every beaſt and every tree,
Thy great deſigns fulfil:
While my wild paſſions rage within,
Nor thy commands obey;
And fleſh and ſenſe, enſlav'd to ſin,
Draw my beſt thoughts away. LYRIC POEMS.

Nay, even infernal ſpirits, thoſe everlaſting enemies of man and goodneſs, may ſerve as your reprovers. Can you think of their unwearied roaming over the earth, in queſt of ſouls as their prey, and their induſtry and toil to do miſchief, without blaming your own negligence to ſave your ſouls, and do good? And could you but hear the loſt ghoſts of your own race, who are now ſhut up in the infernal priſon, burſting out into deſpairing cries, and bitterly accuſing themſelves for their preſumption and ſecurity, their lazy delays, miſimprovement of time, and neglect of the means of grace, while upon earth; how loud and ſtriking a warning would this be to you, who are now walking in their ſteps!

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a brief liſt of your many monitors. And who can ſtand the united reproofs of ſuch a multitude? Who dare ſet himſelf againſt the admonition of earth, heaven, and hell; of God and all his creatures? muſt you not all yield to the warning?

Solomon ſuppoſes, in my text, that a man may be often reproved, and yet *harden his neck*; that is, obſtinately refuſe ſubmiſſion and reformation. A ſtiff neck is a metaphor often uſed in ſcripture, to ſignify an unyielding incorrigible ſpirit, reſolute in diſobedience, in ſpite of all reſtraints; in ſpite of advice, diſſuaſives and reproofs. And to harden the neck, is to confirm one's ſelf in diſobedience, in oppoſition to admonition; or to refuſe to reform, and ſtrengthen one's ſelf in the refuſal, in ſpite of all the means of reformation. It is to cheriſh obſtinacy, to deſpiſe reproof, and reſolve to follow a headſtrong impetuous ſelf-will at all adventures.* The metaphor is taken from

* That this is the meaning of the metaphor, will appear from a particular ſurvey of thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, where it is uſed either in the original, or in our tranſlation. Exod. xxxii. 5, 9. and xxxiii. 3. Deut. ix. 6, 13. and x. 16. and xxviii. 48. 2 Chron. xxx. 8. and xxxvi. 13. 2 Kings xvii. 14. Neh. ix. 16, 17, 29. Pſalm lxxv. 5. Iſa. xlviii. 4. Jer. vii 26. and xvii. 23. and xix. 15. Acts vii. 51.

from an unmanageable, ſullen ox, that will not bend his neck to the yoke, nor kindly draw under it; but ſtiffens his neck, that it may not bear it; and hardens it, that it may not feel it: and the laſh and the goad do not break his obſtinate ſpirit, nor reduce him to willing ſubjection. Thus, nothing but a ſullen and ſenſeleſs beaſt can repreſent the ſtupid, unreaſonable conduct of that man who hardens himſelf in ſin, againſt the ſtrongeſt diſſuaſives and reproofs from God and his creatures.

And is not this the character of ſome of you? I am very unwilling to preſume ſuch bad things of any of you; but I muſt at leaſt put it to your conſciences to determine, whether it be ſo or not? This you may know by this ſingle inquiry, whether you have reformed of thoſe things for which you have been reproved? or whether you ſtill obſtinately perſiſt in them, in oppoſition to the moſt ſtriking admonitions? The profane and profligate among you have often been reproved for your vices; your drunkenneſs, ſwearing, lying, contempt of ſacred things, and other immoralities: but do you not ſtill obſtinately perſiſt in the practice of them? You have often been reproved for the neglect of the worſhip of God in your families, and the ſouls of your domeſtics; what warm remonſtrances have you heard upon this head! And yet, have you not prayerleſs families, prayerleſs mornings and evenings ſtill? Have you not been ſolemnly warned of the danger of neglecting, or careleſsly attending upon, the means of grace? And yet you are negligent and careleſs ſtill? Have you not been earneſtly admoniſhed for your preſumption and ſecurity, your entertaining high hopes of future happineſs, and that you are genuine chriſtians, at random, without honeſt trial and repeated ſelf-examination? And yet do not ſome of you ſtill perſiſt in this ſtupid, pernicious conduct? Alas! how ignorant of your own true character! How unwillingly are you dragged to the bar of conſcience, there to be tried, and hear your ſentence!

ſentence! How ready are you to flatter yourſelves with pleaſing expectations, though in reality contrary to the declarations of eternal truth! And how ſecure and thoughtleſs are you about the great concerns of religion and eternity! how lukewarm and inactive in the duties you owe to God and man, and in your endeavours to work out your ſalvation! But have you not been ſolemnly warned of the pernicious conſequences of this courſe? How often have you been honeſtly told, that this is not the narrow and rugged road of virtue and religion that leads to heaven! How often have you been warned of the danger of miſtaking external formalities for vital religion, and a mere profeſſion of chriſtianity for the heart-experience and conſtant practice of it! And yet do not ſome of you indulge this deſtructive miſtake ſtill? Have you not been often reproved for contenting yourſelves with a dead, fruitleſs faith, an empty ſpeculation, or hiſtorical belief; with tranſient unwilling fits of ſervile repentance, that produce no reformation; and the counterfeit appearances of other graces and virtues? I ſay, have you not often been reproved for contenting yourſelves with theſe, inſtead of that lively, operative, heart-affecting faith, that kindly, ingenuous, voluntary repentance, and thorough reformation, and thoſe other active, practical graces and virtues, which are required in the goſpel, as eſſential conſtituents of a true chriſtian, and abſolutely neceſſary pre-requiſites to everlaſting life? And yet you wilfully indulge the deluſion ſtill, and are unwilling to admit conviction, and diſcover the truth! How often and how ſolemnly have you been reproved for your exceſſive eagerneſs and avarice in the purſuit of this vain world, and your ſtupid neglect to lay up for yourſelves treaſures in heaven, and to be rich towards God! And yet, is not this enchanting world your favourite, and the idol of your hearts ſtill? And are you not ſtill careleſs what will become of you through an everlaſting duration, in an infinitely more important

tant world? That one expoſtulation from Chriſt himſelf might have been an irreſiſtible rebuke to you, *What ſhall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* But, alas! have you not ſtood out againſt this, and a thouſand other pungent admonitions? Have you not often had the dreadful guilt and danger of making light of Chriſt and his precious goſpel, of delaying your converſion to ſome uncertain hereafter, and of preſuming upon the mercy and patience of God, expoſed to your view in a ſtriking light? And yet you have ſtill perſiſted in the practice, in ſpite of reproof and conviction. I might eaſily multiply inſtances on this head; but theſe muſt ſerve as ſpecimens at preſent: and I ſhall only add this general rule for your farther conviction, that whatever ſin you indulge yourſelves in, whatever duty you omit, whatever grace or virtue you live deſtitute of, in oppoſition to the conviction of your own minds within, and of the reproofs and admonitions of God and man from without, you are then guilty of hardening your neck.

And if this be the caſe, how many of you are involved in this guilt? Lay your hand now upon your heart, and ſay, does not conſcience whiſper, or perhaps clamour, "Guilty! guilty!" It is ſtrange, it is unaccountable, it is horrible, that there ſhould be ſuch a monſter upon earth, on whom the repeated reproofs and warnings of God and his fellow creatures have been thrown away; and who dares ſingly to ſtand it out againſt the whole univerſe! But, alas! are there not many ſuch monſters among us? To reprove them again is a very unpromiſing and almoſt deſperate attempt; for they have been ſo inured to it, that they are hardened againſt it, and ſet it at defiance. Yet duty and compaſſion conſtrain us to make the attempt once more: for O! we cannot yet give them up as altogether deſperate, nor reſign them with willing hands as a tame prey to ruin. I know no other

other way to bring them out of danger but to make them ſenſible of it. And this I ſhall attempt, in illuſtrating the remaining part of the text, which informs you of the plain truth, that *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed*, or broken, *and that without remedy;* or, "and there is no cure."

The ſtiff neck that will not bend to the yoke of obedience, muſt be broken; and its own ſtiffneſs renders it the more eaſily broken: for it is not eaſy to break what is yielding and pliable; but even the reſiſtance of the ſtiff neck occaſions its own ruin. It may harden itſelf into inſenſibility under reproof: but O! it cannot harden itſelf into inſenſibility under divine judgments. It may refuſe the eaſy and gentle yoke of the divine law; but divine juſtice will forcibly impoſe its iron yoke upon it, and conſtrain it to bow till it be broken. This is the doom of the obſtinate, incorrigible ſinner: thus ſhall he be deſtroyed and broken to pieces.

But this is not all: he ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, ſuddenly broken. Sudden ruin is aggravated, becauſe it ſtrikes a man into a conſternation, overtakes him unawares, ſurprizes him at a diſadvantage, when unprovided with any methods to eſcape; and alſo tears all his pleaſing hopes from him; and by how much the higher the hopes from whence he falls, by ſo much the deeper he is ingulphed in miſery.

Sudden ruin is the certain and natural conſequence of a man's incorrigible obſtinacy, in ſpite of admonition. He muſt be ruined becauſe he will not be warned, nor forſake the path that leads to deſtruction. He will even take his own way at all adventures, and no man can help it; and therefore he muſt be deſtroyed. He muſt alſo be ſuddenly deſtroyed, becauſe he would hope for ſafety in ſpite of warning; ſuddenly broken, becauſe he would not foreſee the blow. Till he feels the ſtroke, he would not believe it was coming; and therefore his deſtruction is ſudden,

den, ſurprizing, and confounding. This is the natural end of fool-hardineſs and obſtinacy, in ſpite of all reſtraints and admonitions: and there is no help for it: ſuch obſtinacy and preſumption is an incurable diſeaſe, that excludes all remedy. This is implied in the laſt part of the text:

He *ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy;* or, as it might be more literally rendered, "and there is no cure, or medicine, or healing." There can be no preventive medicine to ſuch a ſelf-willed, head-ſtrong creature; becauſe he will not apply it; and puſhes off every friendly hand that would apply it. And there can be no healing or reſtorative medicine applied; for the breach, when made, is deſperate, and admits no cure. The ſtiff neck is broken in pieces, ſo that it never can be healed. Then the patient, ſo obſtinate before, would moſt willingly apply a remedy: but O! it is too late.

Reproofs and admonitions from God and men, and our own conſciences, are the great means to recover ſinners: and while theſe are ineffectual, no other can poſſibly have any effect. How can he be reclaimed from ſin, who will ſin in oppoſition to all reſtraints! In oppoſition to the checks of conſcience, and the ſtrivings of the holy ſpirit within, and the united diſſuaſives and rebukes of Providence, of the word of God, and of all his friends from without! Neither God nor all his creatures can reform and ſave ſuch a wretch, while he continues proof againſt all the means of reformation and ſalvation. It is unavoidable, that he ſhould ſuddenly be deſtroyed; and there is no help for it:—he muſt be given up as an incurable. The whole univerſe may look on, and pity him; but, alas! they cannot help him: He has the inſtrument of ſelf-murder in his own hand; and he will not part with it, but uſes it againſt his own life, without controul: and none can take it out of his hand; that is, none can give his free will a new turn, but that God whom he is daily offending, and

who is therefore not obliged to obtrude ſuch a favour upon him.

This is the unavoidable doom of the man that being often reproved hardeneth his neck. And ſince this is the character of ſome of you, have you not reaſon to fear and forbode this tremendous doom? Let me reaſon a little with you for your farther conviction.

Your danger will appear from theſe two conſiderations, that if you always continue in your preſent condition, proof againſt all admonition, you muſt be deſtroyed without remedy: And that there is dreadful reaſon to fear, you always will continue in your preſent condition.

That if you live and die in your preſent condition, you muſt be deſtroyed without remedy, is lamentably evident from what has been ſaid.—It is the declaration of the wiſeſt of men, inſpired from heaven; *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be* broken, *and* there is no *remedy*. It is one of the proverbs of this wiſeſt of men. Now a proverb is a wiſe remark, made after long obſervation, and frequently exemplified in the world. Therefore, when we conſider Solomon here not only as ſpeaking an inſpired truth, but pronouncing a proverb, it is as if he had ſaid, "This I have collected from long experience, and careful obſervation of mankind, and the courſe of Providence; this is daily exemplified in the world without exception; this all ages may regard as a ſure and important truth, and I record it among my immortal proverbs for their warning, that *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and* there is no *remedy*. A proverb being a familiar obſervation upon the common occurrences of the world, it follows farther, that the accompliſhment of it is a common thing, that falls under every man's notice, to his full conviction; and therefore Solomon, by inſerting this remark among his Proverbs, intimates, that the ſud-

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den and remedileſs deſtruction of an incorrigible ſinner, is a familiar event that falls under every man's notice, and which no man can diſpute, without diſputing the common ſenſe and experience of mankind. Thus certain, irreprovable ſinners! thus common is your doom, if you continue in your preſent condition: it is certain, it is common, even to a proverb. And if you ſtill go on in your preſent courſe, you will at laſt become a hiſſing, a by-word, and a proverb to all the world!—Your deſtruction, as I obſerved, is unavoidable and remedileſs, according to the nature of things: it is the natural, ſpontaneous, and inſeparable reſult and effect of incorrigible obſtinacy. You reſolutely ſet your free wills, which are not under the controul of any creature but yourſelves, upon your own ruin: and what then remains, but that you muſt be ruined! To ruin you muſt go, though attended with the prayers and tears of the ſaints, and checked by their friendly admonitions, enforced with thoſe of God himſelf. They cannot help you againſt your wills. What can keep you from ingulphing yourſelves in deſtruction, when you break through all reſtraints from God and the whole creation? You reject the only means of cure: and muſt you not die as incurables! If the ſpirit of God ſtrives with you in vain; if conſcience check and admoniſhes you in vain; if Providence uſes its chaſtiſing rod in vain; if ſickneſs, and death, and graves preach in vain; if Bibles and good books are put into your hands in vain; if miniſters, and friends, and neighbours, and the deareſt relatives, adviſe, and perſuade, and warn, and reprove in vain; if heaven, and earth, and hell, if God and all his creatures admoniſh in vain; what hopes can yourſelves entertain of your ſalvation! what better means can you deſire! what other means can you expect! can you hope to be reformed and prepared for heaven, when theſe means, the beſt, the only means that ever were uſed with ſinful creatures, and which have proved

proved effectual in the moſt diſcouraging caſes, have no effect upon you! Judge yourſelves, whether your deſtruction is not unavoidable in your preſent condition.

And that you will always continue in your preſent condition, is, alas! but too probable. You have continued in it all your life paſt: and is not this a dreadful preſumption that you will continue in it all your life to come! Can you expect better means than you have had! Or are your hearts become more ſoft and pliable now, when hardened by an obſtinate courſe of incorrigible impenitence, that you ſhould hope the ſame means will have greater efficacy upon them in time to come than formerly! Are you as ſure of twenty or thirty years before you, as that you have enjoyed twenty or thirty years in time paſt! Is God the leſs provoked, by how much the longer you have offended him, ſo that you have more encouragement to expect the aſſiſtance of his grace hereafter than formerly? Are you now any more out of danger of being judiciouſly hardened and given up of God, than ten years ago! And are you the more ſure of his favour, by how much the more you deſerve his wrath? Are the habits of ſin grown weaker through inveteracy and long indulgence! Does the work of your ſalvation grow eaſier by delays, and by your having fewer days for work! Does conſcience gain ſtrength upon you, by your repeated violences; or the ſpirit of God work the more powerfully, the more you reſiſt and grieve him! Does your being inured to the goſpel, give it greater force upon you! If the happy change of your preſent condition be probable, the probability muſt depend, in human view, upon ſuch abſurdities as theſe. But can theſe be the foundation of probability? No; but of the greateſt improbability. The truth of the caſe is, your condition is growing more and more diſcouraging every day; and you are approaching faſt towards a fixed, unchangeable ſtate of incorrigible obſtinacy

ſtinacy in wickedneſs. Ten years ago, it was much more likely, in human view, that you would have been converted ere now, than it now is, that you will be converted in ten years to come. In ſhort, the only ground of hope concerning you, is not at all from the appearance of things in human view, but merely from the free and ſovereign grace of God. I may ſay of your ſalvation, what Chriſt ſaid of the ſalvation of the rich, *with men that is impoſſible:* that is, according to the ordinary way of judging among men, who can judge only by appearances, and who count thoſe things likely or unlikely, poſſible or impoſſible, which ſeem to be ſo in their own nature: according to this rule of judging, there is no reaſon at all to hope for it: it is quite deſperate. *But with God all things are poſſible:* he can and ſometimes does, act contrary to appearances and the natural tendency of things; and aſtoniſhes his creatures with unexpected and ſurprizing wonders. Thus, veteran, obſtinate ſinners! he may yet deal with ſome of you. Omnipotence may yet take you in hand, diſarm all your reſiſtance, and cauſe you to feel thoſe admonitions you have made light of. This, perhaps, God may do. But O! it is an anxious, dreadful peradventure; for you muſt know, though he ſometimes ſingles out an hardened ſinner of your claſs here and there, to make him the illuſtrious trophy of the power of his grace, yet this is not his uſual way: he does not commonly work upon ſuch rough, unſuitable materials. He generally pitches upon the young and pliable, upon thoſe that have not been long inured to the goſpel, nor hardened in ſin. Therefore, even this, which is your only ground of hope, can afford you but a trembling, anxious hope. Notwithſtanding this, you have reaſon to fear that you will die as you have hitherto lived, hardy, reſolute, incorrigible ſinners. And if ſo, you know your dreadful end; you ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed; your ſtiff neck ſhall be unexpectedly broken; and there will be no help, no remedy. And

And if you are indeed in ſo much danger, will you not now lay it to heart, and endeavour to eſcape while you may? Alas! ſhall this admonition alſo, this admonition for your diſregarding all paſt admonitions, be loſt upon you like the reſt? O! will you not at length take warning, before it is too late? Perhaps the voice that now warns you, may not long ſound in your ears. But O! let me find this day, that thoſe whom I have reproved in vain for ſo many years, regard me at laſt, and ſubmit and yield. Then, and not till then, you will be ſafe from the vengeance denounced in this alarming proverb, *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.*

SERMON XLI.

THE NATURE OF LOOKING TO CHRIST OPENED AND EXPLAINED.

ISAIAH xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none elſe.*

IT is the peculiar ſin and unhappineſs of the chriſtianized world, that, while they profeſs and ſpeculatively believe Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, the Saviour of ſinners; and while they harbour ſome kind of high eſteem for him as a Benefactor that appeared upon earth about 1700 years ago, who ſhould be ſtill remembered with gratitude, yet that they are not deeply ſenſible of that intimate, perſonal concern which degenerate ſinners have with him in every age. They do not make that eager, importunate, affectionate application to him, which his character requires

requires as the Saviour of guilty men. Divine juſtice indeed was ſatisfied, the demands of the law were anſwered by the obedience and ſufferings of our divine Redeemer long before we came into exiſtence, and God became reconcileable to a guilty world. But all this alone does not inſure our ſalvation. Redemption muſt not only be purchaſed, but applied; and though it was purchaſed without our concurrence, yet all mankind, in all ages, are concerned in the application of it. There was no need of the goſpel and its ordinances to procure it; but all theſe are neceſſary, and therefore appointed for our obtaining an actual intereſt in it. Hence Chriſt, as an almighty Saviour, is exhibited, and the bleſſings of his purchaſe are offered in the goſpel; and all that hear the gracious propoſal are invited to entertain this Saviour with ſuitable diſpoſitions, and to conſent to the terms on which theſe bleſſings are offered, upon the penalty of everlaſting damnation. Our perſonal conſent is required as much in this age as when the goſpel was firſt publiſhed to the world; and it is this which is ſolicited by all the means of grace; it is to gain your conſent to this gracious propoſal, that the goſpel is ſtill continued among you. It is for this we preach; for this you ſhould hear, and perform every other duty; for this the Lord's Supper in particular was inſtituted, and has been to-day adminiſtered among you. It is to melt your hearts, and engage your affections to a dying Saviour, that he is repreſented both in words and in ſpeaking actions, in all the agonies of Gethſemane, and in all the tortures of Calvary.

But though theſe affecting means have been uſed from age to age, yet, alas! they have not had the intended effect upon multitudes. They act like a ſick perſon infatuated with the imagination that the mere grateful remembrance of Galen or Hippocrates, or ſome other eminent phyſician of paſt ages, will be ſufficient for his recovery, without following their preſcriptions,

preſcriptions, or making a ſpeedy application to a living phyſician now: whereas there is as much reaſon why we in this age ſhould be pricked to the heart, and cry out, *What ſhall we do to be ſaved?* as there was for St. Peter's hearers. Acts ii. 37, 38. There is as much reaſon to exhort unregenerate ſinners now to repent and be converted, as there was to exhort the impenitent Jews to it. There is as much cauſe to direct and perſuade men now to believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as the heathen jailor, who had been an infidel. Acts xvi. 31. It is true indeed, when we now exhort men to believe in Chriſt, we cannot include all the ideas in it which were included in this exhortation when addreſſed to infidel Jews and heathens in the apoſtolic age; for then it included, that they ſhould renounce their former religion, and aſſent to this important truth, That Jeſus is the Meſſiah, and take upon them the profeſſion of chriſtianity; and this is rendered in general, I hope, needleſs in our land, as we have been initiated into this perſuaſion by our education and other means. But, my brethren, all this is far ſhort of that conſent which we muſt yield to the goſpel, if we expect to be ſaved by it. This faith is not that living faith which we are called to act upon the Redeemer; and we muſt give him another kind of reception than multitudes do, who thus believe his divine miſſion, and profeſs his religion. We muſt have thoſe affectionate diſpoſitions and vigorous exerciſes of heart towards him, which become guilty, periſhing ſinners towards an almighty and gracious Saviour, who deſerves and therefore demands our ſupreme affection, our humble dependence on his merits alone, and our hearty conſent to be his ſervants for ever. We muſt be brought to believe in him with ſuch a faith as will regulate our practices, and render the whole of our life a ſeries of grateful obedience to him, who is an atoning Prieſt upon a throne of royal authority, enacting laws and demanding the dutiful ſubmiſſion of his

his ſubjects. And therefore though it is needleſs to call upon you to believe in the ſame ſenſe in which this exhortation was addreſſed to infidels by the apoſtles; yet there is ſtill room enough to urge you to this duty, only leaving out one ingredient then included, viz. a ſpeculative belief and external profeſſion of the chriſtian religion, and that Chriſt is the Meſſiah. There is ſtill reaſon to perſuade ſinners to conſent to the terms of life eſtabliſhed in the goſpel, to renounce all dependance on their own righteouſneſs, and to place their humble confidence in his alone, to acquieſce with the warmeſt complacence in the method of ſalvation through grace, and in the mean time to ſurrender themſelves to his government, to obey his will, with the moſt cheerful willingneſs, the moſt ardent devotion, and the humbleſt adoration: in ſhort, to entertain the great Redeemer with thoſe affections and diſpoſitions which the nature and deſign of his mediatorial office demand, and which become our condition as guilty, miſerable, helpleſs creatures; all which are included in that faith in Jeſus which the goſpel enjoins as the grand condition of ſalvation.

This faith is one of the principal ſubjects of ſacred ſcripture, and is expreſſed in various forms: ſometimes in plain terms, but more frequently in metaphors borrowed from earthly things, and particularly from the actions of the body. This method of expreſſing ſpiritual objects and intellectual ideas, in terms that originally and properly are applied to the body, is not only common in ſcripture, but intermingled in converſation, and authorized by the beſt authors in all ages and languages. We ſpeak of the eye of the underſtanding as well as of our bodily eye: and to ſee an argument, or a meaning, is almoſt as common a phraſe as to ſee a man or any other material object. The evidence by which the ſoul forms its determinations is called light, as well as the medium of proper viſion. And as the metaphor is here

borrowed from the eye, ſo it is frequently borrowed from the other organs of the body and their actions. This is owing to the penury of the language of mortals, who, as they are moſt converſant with material objects, and have the earlieſt and moſt frequent occaſions of receiving or conveying their ideas of them in ſound, are habituated to a dialect proper to theſe things; and, when they would expreſs their ideas of immaterial things, they are obliged to transfer theſe terms, originally applied to material objects, to expreſs thoſe immaterial things; and there is not only neceſſity but reaſon for this, as there is a reſemblance between thoſe actions of the body from which theſe metaphors are borrowed, and thoſe actions of the mind to which they are transferred; yea, it is not only a reaſonable, but a beautiful and moving method of repreſenting divine things: in this principally conſiſts the beauty of poetry, that it clothes intellectual ideas in lively material images, which make deep impreſſions on our imaginations.

In ſuch metaphorical terms as I obſerved, faith is often repreſented in ſacred ſcripture. Sometimes the metaphor is borrowed from the feet; and then to believe is to come to Chriſt; to come to him as one oppreſſed with a heavy burden to a perſon that can relieve, Matt. xi. 28. to come to him as one periſhing with thirſt to a fountain of living water, Iſaiah lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. or as the manſlayer, cloſely purſued by the avenger of blood, to the city of refuge: hence it is expreſſed by the moſt emphatical phraſe of *fleeing for refuge*. Heb. vi. 18. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the conduct of a dutiful and loyal people towards their rightful Sovereign upon his entering among them in his own territories. John i. 11, 12. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the ears; and faith is expreſſed by hearing his voice, as an impoveriſhed dying wretch would hear the offer of plenty and life. Iſaiah lv. 3. John v. 25. And ſometimes, as in the text, the metaphor is taken from the

the eyes; and faith is represented as looking to Christ. My present design is,

I. To explain the duty here expressed by the metaphor of looking.

II. To urge it upon you by sundry important considerations.

I. To explain the duty expressed by the metaphor of looking, we are to observe in general, that a man's looks often discover his condition and the frame of his mind. By virtue of the strange union between the soul and the body, the dispositions of the one are often indicated by the emotions and appearances of the other. The eye, in particular, is a mirror in which we may see the various passions of the mind; and it has a kind of silent, and yet significant language, which conveys to others those inward exercises which the tongue does not, and perhaps cannot express. Hence we can understand a look of surprize and consternation, a look of sorrow and compassion, a look of joy, the look of a perishing supplicant, or of a needy, expecting dependent. If an agonizing patient casts an eager look upon his physician, we understand it to be a silent petition for relief. When a dying husband fixes a wishful, tender look upon his surviving half, or those little other selves, his children, they know the melting language, and feel its resistless energy. And when we see a drowning man casting a wild and eager look towards a boat coming to his relief, we understand it to be the language of earnest importunity to speedy help. Hence it follows, that "looking to Christ, implies those suitable dispositions and exercises of heart towards him, which are expressed by the earnest and significant looks of persons in a distressed condition towards their deliverer." And in such a case it is natural to conceive a person as expressing by his looks a particular notice and distinct knowledge of his deliverer, an importunate cry for his assistance—a wishful expectation of it—a dependance upon him for it—an universal submission

to

to him—an hearty love and approbation of him—and joy and gratitude for his deliverance. And theſe diſpoſitions and exerciſes of mind towards Chriſt are intended in the text by looking to him.

1. Looking to Chriſt, implies a particular notice and diſtinct knowledge of him. When we fix an earneſt look upon an object, we take particular notice and a diſtinct ſurvey of it, and ſo obtain a clear knowledge of it. Thus we are called to fix our intellectual eyes upon Chriſt, to make him the object of our contemplation, and by theſe means to obtain the knowledge of him. Mankind are too commonly regardleſs and ignorant of him. And are not many of you chargeable with this criminal neglect? The bleſſed Jeſus has exhibited himſelf to your obſervation in the goſpel, but your attention is ſo engaged by other objects, that you will not allow him an earneſt look. He has been ſet forth evidently crucified before your eyes, but you have, as it were, paſſed and repaſſed careleſs and unconcerned by his croſs. You have had a variety of opportunities and means to be inſtructed in the glorious myſteries of the goſpel; to know the perſon of the Redeemer as Immanuel, God and man; to know the abſolute neceſſity, the gracious deſign, and the high degree of his ſufferings; to know his ſufficiency and willingneſs to pardon and ſave believing penitents; and in a word, to obtain a competent acquaintance with the method of ſalvation. But you have taken but little or no notice of theſe things; and conſequently remained contentedly ignorant of them. It is equally lamentable and aſtoniſhing, that in a land like this, abounding in Bibles and other means of inſtruction, chriſtianity ſhould be ſo little known even by thoſe that profeſs it. How ridiculous a figure would an artiſt make that knew nothing of his trade! a ſchoolmaſter that could not ſpell! Or a doctor that knew nothing of phyſic! And yet men have the impious impudence to call themſelves chriſtians, and reſent it when

when their profeſſion is pronounced an hypocrital pretence, though they are ignorant of the rudiments of chriſtianity. You are therefore called in the text to purſue the knowledge of God and Jeſus Chriſt whom he has ſent, John xvii. 3. to make this the object of your ſtudy; for without it you cannot be ſaved. It is by the knowledge of him you are juſtified, Iſa. liii. 11. and if you are *a people of no underſtanding, he that formed you will not have mercy on you*, Iſa. xxvii. 11. but you ſhall be deſtroyed through lack of knowledge. Hoſea iv. 6. Not that a mere ſpeculative knowledge of Chriſt will ſuffice; no, it muſt not be a look of curioſity and ſpeculation, but you muſt be affected with the object; your eye muſt affect your heart; and by beholding the glory of the Lord in the glaſs of the goſpel, you muſt be changed into the ſame image, or conformed to him in holineſs. 2 Cor. iii. 18. A periſhing man is not a mere curious ſpectator of his deliverer; but he views him with the tendereſt paſſions. So you muſt look upon Chriſt. Thus the knowledge of him was attended with ſupreme affection to him in St. Paul. Phil. iii. 7, 8. But this will be farther illuſtrated under the following particulars.

2. Looking to Chriſt, implies an importunate eagerneſs for relief from him. See Pſalm xxv. 15. If your child were fallen into the hand of a murderer juſt ready to diſpatch him, and ſhould caſt a wiſhful look upon you, while you was running to his deliverance, you would underſtand it as a ſilent cry for help. So we are enjoined to look to Chriſt with the moſt eager importunity for deliverance from him as our Saviour. And this ſuppoſes a deep ſenſe of our need of him. When a guilty creature, that had been involved in the general preſumptuous ſecurity, is effectually alarmed with juſt apprehenſions of his danger; when he ſees his numberleſs tranſgreſſions in all their horrid aggravations, and the dreadful threatenings of the law in full force, and ready to be executed againſt him:

him: in ſhort, when he ſees himſelf ripe for ruin, and ready every moment to ſink into it, with what importunate cries will he betake himſelf to him for relief! Behold, he prayeth! now he is often on his knees before God in ſecret, as well as in ſocial prayer; and in the intervals between his prayers, he is often looking to the hills from whence cometh his aid, Pſalm cxxi. 1. and wafting up many an importunate cry to heaven. Sometimes he ſinks into an abyſs of ſorrow, and is overwhelmed with boiſterous waves of fears, ſo that, with Jonah, he is ready to cry out, *I am caſt out of thy ſight, O Lord;* yet, with, him he ſays, *I will look again towards thy holy temple.* Jonah ii. 4. Happy the ſouls that are thus looking to Jeſus, who is lifted up for the recovery of a dying world as Moſes lifted up the ſerpent in the wilderneſs! John iii. 14. And happy we, ſhould this ſpirit of pious importunity prevail among us, and baniſh that ſpirit of deep ſleep which ſeems poured out upon us! then would prayer be our employ, not only when we obſerved the returns of ſtated prayer in ſecret, in our families, and in our public aſſemblies, but our ſouls would be always in a ſupplicating poſture; every wiſh, every groan would be a cry for mercy: and then might we expect to obtain the bleſſings we need; and the aſpect of our religious affairs would be happily altered among us. To this duty the text invites us; and O that we may conſult our own intereſt, as well as regard the authority of God, ſo far *as to ſeek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near!* Iſaiah lv. 6.

3. Looking to Chriſt implies a wiſhful expectation of deliverance from him. See Pſalm lxix. 3. It may be illuſtrated by the hiſtory of the lame beggar, in Acts iii. 4, 5. He begged an alms of the apoſtles Peter and John: they do not immediately relieve him, but give him ſome ground of encouraging expectation by taking particular notice of him, and telling him to fix his eyes upon them. Thereupon the anxious

anxious cripple gives heed to them, and wiſhfully looks upon them, expecting to receive ſomething of them. So a poor ſinner, amidſt all his anxious fears and deſpondencies, approaches the throne of grace, and begs for mercy. The Lord Jeſus, though his bowels are yearning over him, does not give him immediate relief; he puts him off for a while, as he did the Syrophœnician, that he may give occaſion for him to plead with the more importunity, and more ſuitably prize the bleſſing when obtained. Yet in this melancholy interval, he does not leave him quite hopeleſs. The invitations of the goſpel cry, "Look on me;" and the poor ſinner lifts up the eyes of wiſhful expectation to receive ſomething. "Who knows but that ſovereign and unbounded grace, which has relieved thouſands, may alſo liſten to my cries! Bleſſed Jeſus! may I not indulge ſome trembling hope that thou wilt at length grant me deliverance? Thy free, thine indefinite invitations and abſolute promiſes give me ſome ground of pleaſing expectation; and O! ſhall it be fruſtrated? No, let me truſt in thee for the gracious accompliſhment." Such are the ſoliloquies of ſuch an anxious ſoul. And though we might be all left in remedileſs deſpair, yet, bleſſed be God, we have encouragement to look to Jeſus with humble joyful hope; and it is to this the text exhorts us.

4. Looking to Jeſus, implies an humble dependance upon him for ſalvation. This ſuppoſes that we are deeply ſenſible of our own utter inability to relieve ourſelves! and when we are convinced of this, we ſhall immediately look to another: when we ſee no ground at all for ſelf-confidence, we ſhall place our truſt in Jeſus alone. It was ſuch a look as this that good Jehoſhaphat raiſed to heaven: *We have no might againſt this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.* 2 Chron. xx. 12. So Micah, finding no room for human confidence, reſolves, *Therefore I will look unto the Lord.* Micah vii. 7. Thus an

an humble ſinner, ſenſible of his utter inability, reſolves to venture upon Chriſt, *to truſt in him, though he ſhould ſlay him.* Job xiii. 15. And in thoſe happy moments when the ſinner has ſome glimmering hopes of acceptance, with what pleaſure and ſatisfaction does he reſt upon this Eternal Rock! and how happy we, ſhould we be engaged this day to place our humble dependance there! It is to this the text calls us.

5. Looking to Chriſt, means an univerſal, cheerful ſubmiſſion to his authority. We muſt conſent to be his ſervants for ever, and wait all the intimations of his will to obey them. We muſt look and obſerve the motion of his hand pointing out to us the way of duty. We muſt look as a ſervant upon his maſter, eager to receive his orders. So the phraſe ſeems uſed in Pſalm cxxiii. 1, 2. *Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwelleſt in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of ſervants look unto the hands of their maſters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her miſtreſs, ſo our eyes look unto the Lord.* Thus, whoever truſts in Jeſus with a ſaving faith, ſurrenders himſelf to an unlimited obedience to all his commandments; and to this the text invites us.

6. Looking to Chriſt, implies a hearty approbation of him as a Saviour, and ſupreme affection to him. Love is often expreſſed by looks; and when we look affectionately upon an object, it evidences that we are pleaſed with the ſurvey. So a periſhing world is commanded to acquieſce in the method of ſalvation through Chriſt, to love him above all, and to take the fulleſt and nobleſt complacence in him: and upon their ſo doing, they are aſſured of ſalvation. We have indeed been influenced by education and the like means to entertain a general good eſteem of Chriſt, but, alas! this is very far ſhort of that endearing affection and hearty complacence which he claims and deſerves. Our hearts muſt be engaged to him; he muſt be the chief among ten thouſand

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in our eyes. Our thoughts and paſſions muſt often aſcend to him, and we muſt reſt in him with complacence, as containing all our ſalvation, and all our deſire. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

7. And laſtly, Looking to Chriſt implies joy and gratitude for his delivering goodneſs. The paſſions of joy and gratitude are eaſily diſcovered by the looks; and therefore are intended by this phraſe, *look unto me.* And this is not only the duty, but the delightful inclination of one that has been relieved by him from the horrors of a guilty conſcience, and the dreadful diſpleaſure of God. Joy is in itſelf a pleaſing paſſion, and we delight to indulge it: and to a heart that has juſt felt the mercy of deliverance from everlaſting deſtruction, thankſgiving is a moſt grateful and pleaſing employ; and in this, much of the happineſs of heaven conſiſts.

From this view of the duty intended by looking to Jeſus, take occaſion, my brethren, to examine whether ever you have complied with it; for it is a matter of infinite importance, as your eternal ſtate depends upon it. *He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.* 1 John v. 12.

SERMON XLII.

ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE OUR LOOKING TO CHRIST.

ISAIAH xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none elſe.*

THE duty of looking to Chriſt being explained, I ſhall,

II. Urge you to look to him by ſeveral weighty conſiderations.

This is the great duty of saints and sinners, and consequently of every one in all ages and places, even to *the ends of the earth*.—It is the duty of sinners to turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, and fix them upon this attractive, but, alas! neglected Saviour; to turn their attention from the trifles of time to the great antitype of the brazen serpent, who is lifted up that a dying world may open their eyes just closing in death, and look and live. And saints, whose eyes have been turned to this glorious object, ought to fix them more intensely upon him, to take larger surveys of his glory, and to renew their affectionate trust in him.

I would premise, that when I exhort sinners to look to Jesus, I would not intimate, that they are able to do this of themselves. No; I am very sensible, that all the exhortations, persuasions, invitations, and expostulations that a feeble mortal, or even the most powerful angel in heaven can use with them will have no effect, but vanish into air, without the efficacious operation of almighty grace. And yet such exhortations are neither useless, improper, or unscriptural: they tend to convince sinners of their inability to believe, which is necessary to their believing aright; and it is while such arguments are addressed to their understandings, that the holy spirit is wont to work upon their hearts. Hence they are so often commanded in scripture *to repent*, *to believe in Christ*, *to look to him*, *to make them a new heart*, &c. I would add, that when I express the duty enjoined under the metaphor of looking, I hope it will not lead any of you into gross corporeal ideas, since the import of it has been so fully shewn.

The arguments to enforce this important evangelical duty can never be exhausted; and therefore I must confine myself to those which this copious text furnishes with, which, when resolved into particulars, will stand thus:

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It is ſalvation we are called upon to purſue—It may be obtained upon the eaſieſt terms, without any perſonal merit, viz. by a look—It is Immanuel, the incarnate God, that commands and invites us to look—and he is the glorious and affecting object to which we are to look—and our looking ſhall not be in vain, for he is God, who engages to ſave thoſe that look to him;—and it is in vain to look elſewhere for ſalvation, and needleſs to fear his grace ſhould be controuled by another: for as he is God, ſo there is none elſe—and we in particular are invited, being eſpecially meant by *the ends of the earth*.

1. It is ſalvation that is here offered. Look, and be ſaved. Salvation! O moſt propitious, tranſporting ſound! Amazing! that ever it ſhould be heard by our guilty ears! Sin, my brethren, has expoſed us to the curſe of the divine law, to the loſs of heaven, and all its joys, yea, and of earth too, and all its entertainments; for death, the conſequence of ſin, will rend us from them. We have no title to any good to ſatisfy our eager pantings; and muſt languiſh and pine through an endleſs duration without a drop of bliſs, if puniſhed according to our demerit. We are alſo ſubject to the torturing agonies of a remorſeful conſcience, to be cut off from the earth by the ſword of juſtice, and ſwept away by the beſom of deſtruction into the reigions of horror and deſpair, there to conſume away a long, long eternity in inextinguiſhable flames, in remedileſs, intolerable torments, in the horrid ſociety of devils and damned ghoſts, who ſhall mutually promote and join in the general roar of torture and deſperation. This, ſirs, is our juſt, our unavoidable doom, unleſs we obtain an intereſt in the ſalvation of the Lord. But ſalvation brings us a complete remedy, aqual to our miſery. It contains a title to the divine favour, and conſequently to all the joys of heaven; it contains a perfect deliverance from all the torments of hell: and ſhall we not then regard and obey the voice that cries,

cries, *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved!* Is it not fit thoſe ſhould periſh without remedy who hear the offer of ſuch a ſalvation with indifference? *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?* Were we now under a ſentence of condemnation to death by an earthly court, and were going out one after another to the place of execution, and ſhould ſome welcome meſſenger with a general pardon in his hand come with joyful ſpeed into this aſſembly, and proclaim, Salvation! Salvation! to all that would accept it on the eaſieſt terms, what a ſhout of general joy would burſt from this aſſembly! What changed faces, what tears of general joy, would appear among us! In this agreeable character, my brethren, I have the honour and the happineſs of appearing among you this day. I proclaim ſalvation from the Lord to dying men; ſalvation to all that will look to him for it. And I would not make the offer to the air, or to the walls of this houſe, but to rational creatures, capable of conſenting and refuſing. I therefore requeſt you to look upon it as a propoſal made to you; to you men, to you women, to you youth and children, to you negroes, demanding a ſpeedy anſwer. Will you look to Jeſus? or will you hide your faces from him? Will you not think him and his ſalvation worth a look? Which leads me to obſerve,

2. This ſalvation may be obtained upon low terms. It may be obtained by a look. Look and be ſaved: and this metaphor implies that no merit is required in us to procure this ſalvation. It is as cheap a cure as that which the Iſraelites obtained by looking to the brazen ſerpent. The ſalvation is wrought already, Chriſt would not ſeparate his ſoul and body, and put an end to his pains, till he could ſay, *it is finiſhed*, and all required of us is a cheerful acceptance: and what terms can be eaſier? It is true we are required to abſtain from ſin, and be holy, in order to enjoy this ſalvation; but can this be looked upon as a hard term? It is impoſſible in the nature of things you ſhould

ſhould be ſaved in a courſe of ſin; for one great part of the ſalvation conſiſts in deliverance from ſin. This is the deadly diſeaſe which muſt be healed, in order to your happineſs. And how then can you expect to be ſaved while you indulge it? Would you not think your phyſician made eaſy preſcriptions to you, if he aſſured you of recovery, when you are ſick, upon condition that you would abſtain from poiſon, and confine yourſelves to a wholeſome diet? Holineſs is as neceſſary to happineſs as temperance to health; and though ſinners, like drunkards, think this a hard impoſition, yet it cannot be altered, without a change in the immutable Deity. Therefore ſubmit to the terms of ſalvation; they are as low, as eaſy as the nature of things will permit. They are not the rigid arbitrary impoſitions of an auſtere being, but the mild, unavoidable requiſitions of an indulgent and wiſe God, acting according to the reaſon of things. If ſalvation was offered to you, upon condition of your making an infinite ſatisfaction for ſin, you might ſtart off from the propoſal; for even almighty grace could not enable you to do this: for this you could not do without being advanced above the rank of creatures, and endowed with infinity, which you are phyſically incapable of. But grace can diſpoſe you to conſent to the terms of the goſpel; grace can turn your eyes to look to Jeſus, for you are only morally incapable of this; that is, you are unwilling, you are ſinfully averſe to it. Come then, look and live. The lowneſs of the terms aggravates the guilt of a non-compliance with them. What do thoſe deſerve who do not think of a ſalvation purchaſed with the blood of God worth a look? What drudgery do you endure, what hardſhips do you voluntarily undergo, to procure ſome of the ſpecious toys of this world? What a difficult regimen will you ſubmit to, what nauſeous potions will you take, for the recovery of the health of your mortal bodies? And will you not take the trouble of a look for the

ſalvation

ſalvation of your immortal ſouls? How eagerly will you accept the offer of any temporal advantage! and will you neglect this invitation to look and live? Eſpecially, when,

3. It is Immanuel, our incarnate God, that invites and commands you to look to him, and be ſaved. You may trifle with the commands of an uſurper, and reject the treacherous invitations of an enemy; but dare you trifle with the injunctions, dare you refuſe the gracious invitations of our ſupreme King and heavenly friend?—That it is Chriſt who here calls us to look to him, is evident from the application of this context to Chriſt by the apoſtle: *To this end Chriſt both died and roſe, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. For it is written, as I live, ſaith the Lord, every knee ſhall bow to me, and every tongue ſhall confeſs to God.* Rom. xiv. 9—11. which words, according to the Hebrew, you find in the verſe following my text. See alſo Phil. ii. 9—11. Moreover the characters here predicated concerning the Lord Jehovah, moſt properly belong to Chriſt, according to the dialect of the New Teſtament; *Surely, ſhall one ſay, in the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength.* Now we know that Chriſt is every where repreſented as our righteouſneſs and ſtrength. *In the Lord ſhall the ſeed of Iſrael be juſtified*, verſe 24, 25. which is ſpoken moſt properly of Chriſt, through whom alone we can be juſtified. It is therefore the voice of our Immanuel that ſounds ſo delightfully in our text. It is his voice which ſpoke this goodly univerſe into being out of its original nothing; which ſaid, *Let there be light; and there was light!* and dare we diſobey his voice by whom all things were created? Col. i. 16. He ſpoke us into being, and we obeyed; and ſhall we, when bleſt with exiſtence, reſiſt his almighty call? It is his voice whom angels obey; Gabriel, and all his flaming miniſters, fly at the firſt hint of his ſovereign pleaſure. Nay, univerſal nature hears his awful mandate, and all her laws

are

are obſerved, or cancelled according to his pleaſure. Events natural and ſupernatural are equally eaſy to him. And is this the majeſtic voice which ſinners hear ſounding in the goſpel, and yet diſregard? Is this he whom they make ſo light of, as not to vouchſafe him a look? Amazing preſumption! Add further, It is his voice which ſhall pronounce the final ſentence upon the aſſembled univerſe. He now ſits exalted upon a throne of grace, ſcattering bleſſings among his ſubjects, and inviting a dying world to look to him and live; but ere long he will put on majeſty and terror, and aſcend the throne of judgment. From thence he will ſpeak, and omnipotence will attend his word to execute it. From thence he will pronounce, *come, ye bleſſed*, on all that hear his call now; and neither earth nor hell can repeal the joyful ſentence. And on thoſe that will not now look to him, he will pronounce, *depart from me;* "away, away from my bliſsful preſence, ye curſed creatures, never, never to ſee me more." And though they can now reſiſt the voice of mercy, yet then they muſt obey the dreadful orders of juſtice, and ſhrink confounded from his face, and ſink to hell. We, my my brethren, muſt mingle in that vaſt aſſembly, and hear our doom from his lips; and can we, in the ſerious expectation of that day, refuſe his call to look to him now? Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him; and how ſhall we ſtand the terror of his face, if we now treat him ſo contemptuouſly?—Theſe conſiderations ſhew, that the call in my text is the command of authority, and therefore that our neglect of it is diſloyalty and rebellion.—But O! there is a more melting, a more endearing conſideration ſtill. It is the voice of our beloved, it is the gracious invitation of love: it is his voice who heard the cry of our helpleſs miſery; who, though equal with God, and poſſeſſed of infinite, independent happineſs, emptied himſelf, and took upon him the form of a ſervant. He often looked up to heaven

ven with ſtrong cryings and tears in the days of his fleſh for us. For us he ſpoke many a gracious word, ſtill upon record; for us he wrought many a miracle; for us he travelled many a fatiguing journey, and endured hunger and thirſt, and all the calamities of poverty. For us he was reproached, belied, perſecuted; and O! for us he ſweat and groaned in Gethſemane; for us his back was furrowed with ſcourging, his face defiled with ſpitting, his head bruiſed with buffettings, and pierced with thorns. For us he was nailed to the croſs; for us he hung in ignominy and torture; for us he ſhed his blood, he breathed out his life; for us his ſide was pierced; and for us the Lord of life lay in the duſt of death. And O! bleſſed Jeſus! after all this love, after all theſe ſufferings, will not the ſons of men afford thee one affectionate believing look, when thou exhibiteſt thyſelf in the goſpel, crying with a loud and loving voice, "Behold me, behold me; look unto me, and be ye ſaved." O ſirs, can you reject the invitation of ſuch a Saviour? are you capable of ſuch horrid ingratitude? He beſpeaks your attention with dying groans; his wounds preach from the croſs and cry, *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth.* There he was lifted up, as Moſes lifted up the ſerpent in the wilderneſs; that whoſoever believeth in him, though in the agonies of death, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life; and can we neglect the invitation of ſuch a Saviour in ſuch circumſtances? Shall a guilty world always find ſomething elſe to look upon, ſo that they cannot ſpare a glance to the bleſſed Jeſus? With what pious horror muſt angels behold ſuch a ſight! And may not the earth ſhudder to ſupport ſuch impious ingratitude!

4. It is Immanuel we are to look to. *Look unto me.* He that iſſues the command is the glorious and attractive object we are called to behold.—The adorable glories of a God, and the milder beauties of a perfect man meet in his perſon. His glories attract the

the admiring gaze of angels, and charm the attention of the happy immortals above. The ſurvey of his prefections is the ſource of all their bliſs, and will furniſh all their powers with extatic employ, through the revolutions of eternal ages. And will not worms look up from the duſt to him? Shall every ſordid trifle engage their intenſe contemplation, while they hide their faces from this glorious Immanuel, as though he had no form or comelineſs?—There is an infinite variety of objects within the compaſs of the creation which attract our attention. Our eyes are charmed with the ſplendor of the day, the midnight glories of the ſtarry arch, the verdure of the ſpring, the majeſty of mountains, the beauties of human faces; nay, there is not a trifling curioſity in nature but engages our obſervation. But all the glories of the univerſe are but the faint reflections of his; they are but obſcure copies of his underived excellencies. And ſhall we be charmed with the tranſcript, and take no notice of the original? Does the contemplation of the works of nature afford ſuch exquiſite entertainment to philoſophic minds, and ſhall not every mind be tranſported in the ſurvey of Immanuel's uncreated glories?—But if all theſe conſiderations fail, ſure the love of Chriſt muſt conſtrain you. He has exhibited himſelf to your view this day in a veſture dipt in blood. He has emblematically paſt before you crowned with thorns, and covered with blood; and as Pilate ſaid to the Jews, to melt them in compaſſion, ſo ſay we to you, *Behold the man!* And will you turn away from him regardleſs, or view him with as much indifference as though he were a malefactor? What is this but to join the Jewiſh rabble, *away with him! away with him! crucify him! crucify him!* He has virtually ſaid to you as to Thomas, *Look into my hands, and behold the print of the nails; and look into my ſide, and behold the ſtab of the ſpear, which opened a fountain of life for you.* And can you deny an affectionate look to ſuch an object? He hangs conſpicuous on the croſs, his nerves

racked, his bones disjointed, his heart melting like wax in the midst of his bowels, while streams of blood run down his sacred body; and it is in this posture we are to look upon him. In this posture, as it were, he issues forth his gracious invitation, *Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.* And is there a mortal so hardy, so ungrateful, as to refuse an affectionate look to him in such circumstances? Shall he complain, with David, his type, *I looked for some to pity; but there was none.* Psalm lxix. 20. *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; no man cared for my soul.* Psalm cxlii. 4. Blessed Jesus! shalt thou take up this complaint over creatures for whom thou didst bleed and die! over creatures who owe all their hopes to thee! may not the whole creation be struck with consternation at the complaint! why are not the miraculous solemnities that attend thy death renewed? Why do not the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the sun put on the livery of a mourner, to see a dying God and a careless world! the Creator, the Saviour of men, in agony, in blood; and his creatures, his ransomed, asleep, and not affording him so much as a look of love and compassion! Were ever such horrid incongruities pronounced at a breath, or united in one sentence!—But the cross is not the only place where we should look upon him. Lift up your eyes to seats above, there you may behold him who tasted of death, crowned with glory and honour. His head, that was once crowned with thorns, is now adorned with a crown of glory: his face, that was once bruised with blows, and disgraced with spitting, shines brighter than the sun in his meridian glory: His hands, that were once nailed to the cross, now sway the sceptre of the universe: and his feet, that were cruelly pierced, now walk the crystal pavement of heaven. He that was insulted by Jews and Gentiles, he at whom they wagged their heads, is now adored by all the heavenly hosts, who congratulate his exaltation,

tion, and cry with united voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing.* Rev. v. 11, 12. This is the voice of ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands in that world where Jeſus is beſt known. And ſhall we break the harmony of the univerſal choir? Shall we not echo back their ſong, and reply, *To him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood* (which is more than he did for angels) *to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.* Rev. i. 5, 6. Shall we not look to him whoſe glory attracts the eyes of all the celeſtial armies, and congratulate his exaltation? We have cauſe indeed to rejoice in it; for O! he is exalted, that he may have mercy upon us, Iſa. xxx. 18. he has aſcended the throne, that he may thence ſcatter bleſſings on a guilty world beneath him. He retains his uſual love, and the tendereſt bowels of compaſſion towards the meaneſt of his people. He is now pleading their cauſe in the court of heaven, and preparing a place for them. From thence he exhibits himſelf to our intellectual view, and invites us to look to him. And can we ſlight ſuch glory and love united? Are our natures capable of ſuch infernal gratitude? O let us look to him, eſpecially ſince it ſhall not be in vain?

For, 5. He is able to ſave us upon our looking to him. *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, for I am God.* This is annexed as the reaſon of the duty enjoined; and what can give us greater ſecurity of ſalvation upon our compliance? *If God be for us, who ſhall be againſt us? If God juſtify, who is he that condemneth?* It is his right to conſtitute the terms of ſalvation, and he has almighty power to ſave all that comply with them. It is that God, who threatens to puniſh ſinners, that here promiſes to ſave them upon their looking to him. And what glorious encouragement, what ſtrong conſolation does this afford us! Is there a creature here ſo full of unbelieving deſpondency, as ſeriouſly to think that even Jehovah cannot ſave him? Surely

no;

no; therefore look and be saved, for it is God that undertakes to save you. And he can do exceeding abundantly more for you than you can ask or think. Your sins may be mighty, but not almighty: your guilt may be great, but the blood of God can expiate it: the obstructions in your way may be numerous and insuperable to you, but he can reduce a mountain into a plain before you. You are feeble helpless things, *but have you not heard? have you not known, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* Isa. xl. 28—31.

6. Look to him; for as he is God, so there is *none else*. This implies that there is no other Saviour, and that this sole Saviour is controulable, and therefore able to save.

It is only a God that is able to work our salvation. Men, angels, all creatures are unequal to the task. They cannot satisfy divine justice for our sin; they cannot subdue our corruptions, and sanctify our hearts; nor conduct us safe through all the dangers and temptations that surround us. We in particular are utterly incapable of these things. It is not in the power of our hand to relieve ourselves.* And if you will not look to Christ, to whom will you look? *Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints, to which of the angels, wilt thou turn?* You are shut up to the faith, my brethren; you have no alternative but to look to Christ, or sink to hell. There is no salvation in any other. And will you rather be without a Saviour than look to him as such? Why, what evil hath he done? Why such

* To attempt to save ourselves is to affect to be Gods, and to claim the peculiar work of omnipotence.

ſuch ſtrange averſion to your beſt Friend, who is able to ſave to the utmoſt? And as none elſe can ſave, ſo

He is able to ſave, becauſe beyond controul. There is no God beſides to reverſe his will; but whom he bleſſes, is bleſſed indeed. *He is Head over all things to his church.* He limits the power, controuls the rage, and baffles all the politic ſchemes of the powers of hell; and the hearts of men, of kings, are in his hand, and he turns them whitherſoever he pleaſes. None therefore ſhall pluck his ſheep out of his hand; but he will give unto them eternal life. Look then to him, poor trembling weaklings, that are daily putting your life in his hand, and often diſmally forebode your own deſtruction, and the victory of your enemies. *Truſt in the Lord Jehovah; for in his arm is everlaſting ſtrength.*

7. And laſtly, Look to him, for you are particularly invited, being eſpecially meant by thoſe in the ends of the earth. A promiſcuous call may not be regarded ſo much as a particular invitation directed to us, as it were, by name. We dwell in a continent that may be called the ends of the earth with peculiar propriety; and though America was unknown in Iſaiah's time, and probably not in his thoughts when he uttered theſe words, yet no doubt that omniſcient Spirit, who inſpired his lips, had a reference to it. It is true the words may be taken figuratively, as referring to the Gentiles in general, who might be ſaid to be in the ends of the earth with reſpect to the favourite land of Judea, which was ſituated near the middle of the then known world, on the borders of Aſia, near where it joins with Europe and Africa. Thoſe in the ends of the earth ſeem alſo to ſuggeſt to us the ideas of poor outcaſts in a helpleſs condition, as the Gentiles then were, without the knowledge of God and the means of grace. And if we take the text in this ſenſe, it ſtill refers to us who are the poſterity of heathens. But methinks there

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is a particular beauty and propriety in it taken literally; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, ye that dwell in the remotest ends of the inhabited earth; look unto me, ye Americans, ye Virginians." O what a joyful sound! Not many years ago we or our near ancestors came from the old continent of Europe or its adjacent islands; and the Lord hath driven out the heathen from before us, and planted us in their stead. We left his church and the favourite lands where his gospel had shined for ages, and came among savages that never heard of the name of Jesus, but dwelt in darkness and the shadow of death. But lo! he sends his gracious invitation after us to the ends of the earth, *Look unto me, and be ye saved.* In the days of Isaiah God was mindful of America, he was mindful of Virginia, and treasured up a rich invitation, till it should be inhabited, and in need of it. And shall we not regard it? Shall we not regard his voice crying in this wilderness? Indeed if any other blessings were worthy to be compared with those of the gospel, I might observe that he has not been kind to us in this respect only. He has turned this wilderness into a fruitful field; the residence of savages and wild beasts into a mart of nations. *He hath blessed us also, so that we are multiplied greatly; and he suffereth not our cattle to decrease.* See Psalm cvii. 36—38. We may borrow the words of Moses, in Deut. xxxii. 10—14. But, alas! we have waxed fat, and kicked against God, like well-fed horses against their proprietor. We have turned his blessings into occasions of sinning. We have improved in guilt and impiety in proportion to our improvement in riches and the arts of life. And it is an instance of divine patience that may astonish even heaven itself, that so ungrateful a land has not been visited with some signal judgment. But our iniquities are not yet full, and we hope there are more than ten righteous persons among us, whose prayers stand in the gap, and prevent the irruption of vengeance. But perhaps our

our day is at hand, and then, though Noah, Daniel, and Job ſhould ſtand before God, yet his heart will not be turned towards us. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people, and unwiſe! is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and eſtabliſhed thee.* Deut. xxxii. 6. But to abuſe the goſpel is the greateſt of all crimes. It is this that ripens a people for ruin, and fills up the meaſure of their iniquity: God will eaſier bear with the abuſe of any mercy than with the contempt of his Son. *Therefore look unto him, and be ye ſaved, O ye ends of the earth!*

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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